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Lotos petals





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LOTOS PETALS











He grasped the picture, tore it down, crumpled it in hands that suddenly were strong to rend and destroy

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# LOTOS PETALS

By  
PRINCESS DER LING

*Author of Kowtow, etc.*



*Illustrated by S. Pinkus*

*New York*  
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

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## THE FORBIDDEN CITY AND BROADWAY

I WAS ordered to the Manchu court in 1903, by Her Majesty Tzu Hsi, Empress Dowager of the Middle Kingdom, so shortly after the Boxer Uprising that it was then but a happening of yesterday. Her Majesty, nominally ruler of four hundred million people, still obeyed the mandates of the foreign countries which were slicing up commercial China to divide among themselves. The United States earned the undying gratitude of China by stipulating that such indemnity as the powers decided the United States was entitled to, be used for the education, in American colleges and universities, of selected Chinese young men and women.

These young men and women today have grown to a number which is almost incomprehensible to the old-fashioned Chinese, and an examination of the past of most of the big figures in China today will lead to a

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strange sprinkling of American campuses. The United States has had more to do, indirectly, with the situation in China today than she realizes.

And as I look at China of the republic, neither minimizing her faults nor exaggerating her virtues, I find it good. Manchu though I am, and proud of the proud race whence I sprang, I realize that the imperialist régime was not good for China, and that not even the might of Tzu Hsi, had she lived, could have averted the Revolution of 1911.

Automobiles, airplanes and railroads have come nearer making China a united nation than has any Son of Heaven since the beginning of Chinese history. The motion pictures, distorted though their message may be, have nevertheless shown China much about the outside world. The radio blares in every market place in a vast confusion of tongues, for China's dialects are many and no one man or woman knows them all. I speak eight Chinese dialects, yet often am as much lost in China as the greenest foreigner.

To understand why the result of all this is little short of cataclysmic, one has but to go back beyond 1911. Before that date was ancient China. Since then China has stepped forward a thousand years, and it is little wonder that she has stepped into pitfalls, since she has traveled so rapidly.

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So, as in one of those motion-picture fade-outs, let us see the seething hordes of uniformed soldiery massing on the Siberia-Manchuria border. Observe them closely. Gradually they fade away, to give place to the Forbidden City of yesterday, when Her Majesty Tzu Hsi was mighty ruler of four hundred million people. I was her first court lady. I had been educated in Europe, and so took with me to the court something of the Western viewpoint. At this time Her Majesty was almost seventy years of age, and, though her forty-three years as almost absolute ruler of China had been filled with trials and hardships, she still was possessed of a keen mind, though an autocratically intolerant one, and to serve her was an experience one might never forget.

Inside the Forbidden City, in the heart of Peking, Her Majesty was the sun about which all China revolved. Even the humiliating experience of the Boxer Uprising could not rob Tzu Hsi of the reverence of her subjects. Her court was magnificent. Her gowns and those of her court ladies were studded with precious stones. She was surrounded by thirty-six hundred eunuchs whose duty it was to be as servant maids for the court. They held their jobs by flattery, each eunuch humbling himself before the eunuchs next in rank above him, and all of them paying abject homage

to Old Buddha, the nickname by which Her Majesty was known. Certain hours of the day were set aside by Her Majesty for audience with her ministers, and war would scarcely have changed her habits in this regard, while securing a special audience for any reason was almost as difficult as for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Her Majesty would keep the ministers waiting on their knees in the courtyard. In that courtyard, their knees scraped by the rough cobblestones, were the men whose duty it was, under Her Majesty's tutelage, to administer the affairs of China. Yet, regardless of what happened, regardless of crises, the affairs of China had to wait until Her Majesty was appropriately arrayed for the audience in the gowns of her painstaking selection. More important to her was the matter of maintaining the imperial dignity before her ministers than the matters they brought for her advice, and nothing could be brought forward for her attention until the ceremonials of the audience were carried out.

First, Her Majesty would appear in the door of the Audience Hall, with the emperor and the young empress. Beautiful court ladies, and some who were not so beautiful, were bidden to remain behind the screens which backed the throne, in order that their fair beauty should not come under the eyes of men—and many



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a strange thing have I seen from my vantage point behind those screens!

Her Majesty appeared, and all the great ones of her kingdom—men whose names are household words in China today and which were known all over the world even then, which have a place in history nothing can take from them—went down and bumped their heads on the cobblestones in the kowtow which is almost as old as royalty in China. Her Majesty received the abject obeisances of her subjects as her due. She took them for granted.

Then, for a while after the kowtow, business still was held in abeyance while the great ones asked after Her Majesty's health. For her health, good or bad, was more important than China! Men whose wealth exceeded the ransoms of kings, men whose words could set half China in turmoil, trembled before Her Majesty like guilty school children before a martinet teacher who rules with the rod. Above the door of the Audience Hall was a sign in Chinese. The words, translated, were Long Life Audience Hall, and I once heard a very famous minister, when the point came in the ceremonial when each minister must kowtow anew and tell his name to Her Majesty, read off this sign in place of his own name: "My name is Long Life Audience Hall." Fear of Her Majesty was ingrained

in the very fiber of the Chinese being, and no man was great enough to be free of it.

During the day there were men at court on official business. At night the only "man" in the Forbidden City or the Summer Palace was His Majesty Kwang Hsu, the deposed emperor. Only the eunuchs remained behind the walls between sunset and sunrise.

When Her Majesty traveled from the Forbidden City in Peking, to the Summer Palace in the Western Hills, sixteen miles away—a journey she sometimes made as often as three times a week—the entire road to the Western Hills must be first covered throughout with yellow sand. Yellow is the color of Chinese royalty. Her Majesty must be the first to pass along this road, which must be free of all footprints. Before her return, new sand must be spread. Many times have I followed her sedan chair in my own, along this pathway of gold, and many times—an action very indiscreet on my part—have I lifted the inevitable curtains on the side of my chair to peer forth to see what the populace did when Her Majesty passed.

But every street was deserted. Every road was empty. Every house was barred and bolted! No human being in all China, save folk of certain rank, dared gaze upon Her Majesty passing through, or might even so much as look at her sedan chair, and de-

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capitation might easily be the punishment for any who dared lift his eyes or even be within sight of the eunuch toadies on the journey along those sixteen miles; for the eunuchs joyed in torture.

Every person in China held Her Majesty in awe, because she had the power of life and death over the greatest and the least. Her merest wish had the force of an imperial decree. We were all her slaves. Some of us she favored, some she hated, and it was almost as dangerous to be in favor as out, since one never could tell when the favored might fall from grace and the outcast be elevated. A court of whims!

That was my life in China, after my return from France, where my father, the late Lord Yu Keng, had been minister. I, of course, had a certain amount of freedom, because my father had never had any patience with the old forms, though forced to defer to them to a certain extent. Even as First Lady-in-Waiting, and with influence on Her Majesty beyond that of almost any of her ministers, I still was bound about by restrictions. I could not go out without dropping the curtain of my sedan chair. Not even the coolies who carried me could look upon my face. They would bring my chair, leave until I had been escorted to it and placed inside by some female member of the family or servant staff, the curtain discreetly dropped, when the coolies

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would return and carry me away to whatever was my destination. The destination, by the way, I knew but vaguely, because others were charged with my safety during my travels from home, and I never had to find my way anywhere. This has remained with me until today, and though the old life is two decades behind me, I still get lost when I go more than a block or two from my hotel. But what a lot of fun I have with the freedom which is mine here in the United States!

The Manchus, of course, never bound the feet of their women, and my feet are natural; but every foreigner has heard of the hideous custom which reaches back beyond the Christian Era. What could more plainly show the rigid guardianship of women? Women were chattels, the fact carefully masked behind the pretense that womenfolk were "delicate flowers," "glorious lilies," "tranquilly flowering blossoms," "beautiful bits of perfect jade," and all the other things expressed in flowery Chinese names. This as excuse to hide them away, guard them carefully, keep them in ignorance and maintain them as prisoners.

But not today! The China flapper goes forth with her male escort, to the utter scandalization of old-fashioned Chinese, rolls her stockings and her cigarettes, and apes her Western sisters as far as possible. It is a radical change for her, but a good one.

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I was shopping in New York on my first visit there. Saleswomen pressed me to try this and that, told me how much a negligee, gown or scarf would become me. I was polite, but I had ideas of my own about clothing. Relinquishing each bit of finery reluctantly, I assembled the things I wished and they in no wise resembled what had been recommended to me.

"You certainly know something about clothing," one saleswoman said.

Why should I not have known? I have worn the finest the world has had to offer, and not even the finest of the fine things I have worn would I, today, have taken in trade for the little Occidental sport suit I wore to that Broadway shop. The sport dress shows my knees, but I am not ashamed of my knees, though in the old days, if I myself was not ashamed of knees others were ashamed for me, and so I wore clothing which dragged in the dust of floors and courtyards, muffled me from ears to heels, hid me completely from the eyes of men.

That evening I was to attend grand opera, where a world-famous singer was to make her début in New York City. For this I required something special in the way of dress. I wore an ermine wrap which Her Majesty had given me, and knew, as I stepped into the foyer, that not a lady there was gowned more perfectly



than was I. I wore the gowns of the Occident as though to the manner born. In the China of the time of that very cloak which I wore, I would not have been permitted to attend such a public function. There were theatricals held at court, plays written by Her Majesty and acted by her eunuchs.

Later I attended late supper at the home of a friend. We were all seated about the table, and the talk was general. Absently I fingered the cloth which covered the table, and something in the feel of the ribbon which bordered the cloth caused me to study it for a moment, and for just that moment my heart stood still.

Just a ribbon of special weave, yet for me it brought back a certain day at court. Her Majesty had given me a gown of wonderful weave, of gorgeous workmanship. But in those days I was surfeited with gowns. Her Majesty gave me more than I could ever wear, all priceless, but so many of them. This one was perhaps the finest of the lot, but it was designed for a woman twice my age.

I could not refuse Her Majesty's gift, so I admired it and accepted it and put it away. Years later an American woman came to China. She was interested in old things, especially things which had come from the court. She looked over everything I had kept after the fall—gowns, jades, porcelains, shoes studded

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with pearls, Manchu hats with sable tails—and I finally brought out the gown Her Majesty had given me, and ended by giving it to my friend.

She had returned to the United States. A friend of hers had seen the gown, had admired a ribbon in it which we in China call "the ribbon of the endless knot," and so my friend gave her the ribbon.

And here, tonight, I was fingering that same ribbon, woven into the border of a tablecloth in an American home. Yes, the same ribbon! There was never another one like it. My hostess had been my friend's friend.

From the gown of an empress to a tablecloth upon which men and women who talked of horse racing dropped the ash from their cigarettes, and not a soul here, save myself, knew or guessed, and I choked up so I couldn't tell them! A strange, even weird, cycle; oddly, I thought, like my own.

I first experienced the Western World as a young girl in Paris. Here my father permitted me to live as an Occidental, as far as possible. I went shopping with my sister and delved into the quaint places of the city. But always there were two others with us—my father's coachman, who had secret instructions from Father and Mother to see that we did not get lost or visit forbidden places, and a chaperon who knew but one word in any

language—"don't!" So here, though we dressed as Western girls and looked so much like them—Manchus are very fair—that people rarely noticed us in the hurry and shuffle of the West, we still were hedged about by restrictions rooted deep in the soil of China.

I early learned to speak French and English. I had opportunities and advantages which were never vouchsafed my sisters in China, and those days stand out in my life as the most deliriously happy of it all. But there was always plenty of criticism, you may be sure of that! We brought many servants with us from China—servants who had served their masters all their lives, servants whose forbears had served my forbears—to say nothing of lesser legation officials who were extremely old-fashioned.

Innocent as were my sister and I, we were accused to my father of many indiscretions. There was no evil in either of us, but to the minds of dignified China, as represented by servants and lesser officials, there was the appearance of evil, which was just as bad.

And when I returned from Paris to China, and Her Majesty called me to her court! My sister and I came to court wearing the latest—of that day—in Parisian gowns, because we had no Manchu clothing, and the call had been too imperative for us to prepare. How the eunuchs stared at us and made comments behind

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their hands! Some of the boldest even tried to examine us closer, to see what we wore underneath those gowns, if anything. Abandoned creatures we! But Her Majesty was always interested in foreign dress and foreign habits, though she invariably condemned them all as barbaric, and instructed us to wear our Parisian things at court until she had thoroughly informed herself of their intricacies. Even she was not immune from curiosity, and I recall a day when, in the presence of a thousand eunuchs, she herself had us partially disrobe to satisfy her curiosity.

Foreigners, or people who looked like foreigners, within the Forbidden City! What sacrilege! Memorials of protest came in daily, and all demanded the extreme penalty of us for daring thus to parade our shamelessness before the world. Her Majesty, however, was stubborn and paid little attention to memorials, which was fortunate for us. But she tired, eventually, of her whim, and instructed us to dress as Manchu court ladies.

When the experience had ceased to be a novelty, I remember I wandered away by myself to the famous colonnade in the Summer Palace, near the Western Hills, and wept most bitterly because I was homesick. Whenever my sister and I had the opportunity we often went to a certain flat stone at the crest of the high-

est hill in the Summer Palace, where none could hear us, and sang grand opera with only each other as audience, and enjoyed ourselves to the full.

Three years I was a court lady, and never for a moment of that time was I absolutely alone, so that I could do as I wished. I rose early on frosty mornings, and circled a corner of Kun Ming Lake to Her Majesty's private dwelling, when it was my turn to waken her. No soldier was ever held more strictly to his duty than was I. I was bound as with chains by the merest whims of Old Buddha, and that I truly loved Her Majesty made the chains not one whit less galling.

I thought of all this as I sat at late supper in the nice apartment, twenty-odd stories above Broadway, picking at my food. Even the food recalled the old days to me. Meals without number, served in monotonous routine which never varied. Her Majesty would have her meals—she was a great eater, a connoisseur of foods—and there were usually fully a hundred different dishes from which she might choose. The food was brought in by eunuchs who had won their stations as food servers to Her Majesty only after years of study and effort to please her whims. No hands might touch the food which fed Her Majesty. Serving her was a ritual of deference. Her Majesty sat to



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eat, and none might sit in her presence, nor might any eat with her, though she finally gave me the high honor of eating with her, so long as I stood well back from her and was dainty enough with my food to please her. The best food that could be had. I grew fat and roly-poly with eating it, and could never get enough of it; but I enjoyed not even the finest meal at court as thoroughly as I have since enjoyed food served in a common American kitchen and prepared by my own hands.

Before I went to court, while my father was inspector of *Likin* at Hankow, we lived in a "foreign house," which was a never-ending source of amusement to all our neighbors. Our neighbors believed in being "neighborly" to the extent of what the West would regard as nose-y. On a particular day we had a great reception to which all officials within a certain radius were invited, a gala affair, rivaling the rainbow in its hues, because officials came in their marvelous robes of great richness. We lived on the second floor of the house, and so were sufficiently elevated that everybody could see what was going on behind our curtains. We dared not close the curtains because of the warmth, but also because to shut off the view of the curious would have been an unpardonable affront. So our neighbors gathered all around, stared at our windows, and even brought glasses through which they could more closely

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follow our antics. They shouted aloud in glee to one another, commenting frankly on individuals who took part in our reception, laughed at funny things and spoke scornfully when scorn seemed apropos, all loud enough for us to hear—and in China of that day it was quite all right! No one was offended, and the neighbors paid us a compliment by being interested in what we did. But suppose my neighbors here in Los Angeles were to show such interest!

In China of my day people got together, and in China, as everywhere else, people gather to talk. Suppose that a roomful of people is discussing something of vital interest to them all, or some famous man, perhaps even the guest of honor, is telling a story. Here in America such a one is listened to with rapt attention, no matter how much of a bore he may be. It is polite to listen. In China it is polite, but it isn't required by custom. If a man is telling a story, it is quite all right to interrupt him in any way at all. People can talk over his head, around and through him, and even the person to whom he may be directly talking can stop him, ask him an irrelevant question, and it is quite all right. It is a virtue in the story-teller to be patient.

I sit here in my California bungalow and look out across the street at the nice houses across the way, some of them covered with trailing vines which almost

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blanket their doors and windows. I note the well-kept lawns, the deep red roses in the flower beds and boxes, the yellow lilies, all the flowers which grow on my street. If I lived in China and the urge was upon me, I would pay my neighbor the compliment of walking across his lawns, stepping into his flower beds and boxes and picking such of the blooms as pleased me. He would retaliate by tramping across my lawn and picking my flowers, with the result that neither of us would have either lawns or flowers, and his kids would tear down my vines, and my children his.

If I were in China today my neighbors' servants would be forever in and out of my house, especially my kitchen, and my things would be my neighbors' things and they would seldom return them. If I were entirely guided by Chinese upbringing I would return the compliment by borrowing their things and failing to return them; but my Western upbringing balked me when I lived in China, so that I was often purchasing things to replace things taken by kind-hearted neighbors. If, in China, I were preparing to give a party of some kind, my neighbors would come in, perhaps without knocking, look over all my preparations, make remarks that were kindly or otherwise, go back and tell their neighbors, who would likewise troop in and make themselves at home. Then, when my party was

in full progress, they would probably all come back and stare at my guests, go into the cloak rooms and examine their doffed wraps and generally make nuisances of themselves.

I can close my eyes and become, in a matter of seconds, the first court lady of Tzu Hsi, the Old Buddha, which I once was. I can hear the high-pitched laughter of eunuchs and serving maids, and feel upon my shoulders the ponderous weight of the court gowns, which were priceless and altogether lovely. I can hear the "don'ts" of my girlhood, and see the lifted eyebrows of those who regarded me in those days as a barbarian. These latter, of course, were the old-fashioned officials, who never forgave my father for educating me abroad, and never ceased protesting to the throne for even allowing me to set foot within the sacred confines of the Forbidden City. I wore a gown which rivaled the hues of the rainbow, second in wondrous texture and pattern only to Old Buddha's own. I almost staggered under the weight of a great headdress studded plenteously with pearls—real ones—and my fingers sparkled with gems. Even my long finger-nail protectors were studded with pearls. I wore the high-heeled shoes of a Manchu princess, studded with more pearls. I hid my face from men. I went my way with all the stately dignity which was my right as a court lady of Her Maj-

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esty, and I was utterly lonely because there was no one of sufficient rank about for me to fraternize with, and custom decreed that I must not deign even to notice my inferiors. I was very lonely, a prisoner in the midst of lavish plenty.

Then I open my eyes. Through the window I see my own car at the curb. On the table the latest books, theater programs from which I may choose my entertainment for the evening, and what a delight it is to know that I can either go for a drive, read books or write them, or go to any one of a hundred different reviews, symphonies, baseball games, horse races or what have you, and nobody is curious about what I do with my time, nobody tells me to hide my face from men. Nobody tells me I must remain away from the theater unless I go with an escort and sit in a box with shadows hiding my face.

Here, if I like—and I shamelessly confess that I do like—I can cook my own meals. Had I done that in China I would forever afterward have lost face, and to a Chinese loss of face is far more terrible than loss of fortune. Fortune, may be regained; face never. If I went golfing in China my old-fashioned friends, noting how strenuously I performed on the links, invariably advised me to let my servants do it. The same when I danced—and after I left court I danced



a great deal. If, desiring to do the thing properly, according to my own ideas, when I gave a big dinner to my friends of all nationalities, I arranged the flowers with my own hands, I lost face in the eyes of my own servants—of whom I had always from four to twenty, each one a greater nuisance than the other—because I dared to do work which was theirs to do. No one ever gave a thought to the unbelievable possibility that I might enjoy arranging flowers myself. I was *Tai Tai*, the “missy,” and I should never do anything with my hands except keep them folded in my lap and see that my manicurist kept them beautiful.

China is philosophical, harboring the belief that what is to be will be, and that nothing will change it, therefore there is no use trying; while the West molds circumstances to its own ideas and gathers a heap of bruises in the molding. Personally I think that China enjoys life the more, because she takes it up in her hands, regards it thoughtfully, accepts it, and lives it in luxurious ease, waited upon, petted and coddled, for a monotonously long number of years, by personal servants who are in turn petted and coddled by lesser servants.

The West has conveniences which are far and away beyond those of China, yet the grand lady of China would find the West an unbelievable hardship. She

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couldn't pry into her neighbors' affairs, talk out loud at the theater, borrow all the landlord's glassware, and could not have her servants with her in the box at the theater. She couldn't have so many servants in her home, and would starve beside the ice box because there would be no one to open it for her; would die of thirst in the midst of water faucets because to turn the taps would be too great labor, and none to do it.

She would live in rags because she would never be able to go shopping, even window-shopping—joy of all joys of women—because all her life she has been accustomed, in China, to having the shopkeepers come to her boudoir, bringing their offerings with them for her to pick and choose. Even then she would not finger the materials, but would delegate the task of holding things up for her inspection to whichever of her servants had the cleanest hands.

Life in China is a long song played softly in a low, tranquil key. Friendships are deep and last for always. Poets do not even write their own poems but retain professional scribes to set them down. The well-to-do do not read but bring in professionals to read to them or keep such readers by them as permanent members of the domestic staff. In the West, life is a whirlpool in which those who are unwilling to do battle are likely

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to drown—but what satisfaction one gets out of the battle, as long as one escapes.

Which manner of life is better? I know them both. And I would not trade my bungalow for the Forbidden City itself, with the Summer Palace as cumshaw—though the smallest building in either is larger than my California home; but in the latter I live and am free.





## THE WHITE FOX

ONCE upon a time in ancient China there lived a beautiful woman who was very bad. The Empress of Heaven in high displeasure changed her into a beautiful white fox and condemned her to roam the world for a thousand and a hundred years, suffering for eleven centuries for the few evil years which had so displeased Her Majesty.

Days, months, years and centuries swept down their endless corridors, closing the doors of time. The white fox, wandering here and there on the face of the earth, suffered her appointed time in silence; she could not speak, could tell no living person of her torment.

Then the day came when she happened to look through the open window of the cheerless little abode of Kwan Ching, an ambitious student who slaved the hours away against the time when he must take his ex-

aminations and prepare to take his rightful place among the great lawgivers and magistrates of the Middle Kingdom.

Kwan Ching had a secret. It was a secret he told no one until matchmakers, go-betweens, friends and relatives gathered about him, urging him to marry before he should be ordered up for his examinations.

On the wall of the study chamber of Kwan Ching was a beautiful picture that was very old—a picture of a China maiden, dressed in an ancient court costume.

The face of the China maiden was like a cameo. Her eyes seemed to peer lovingly out upon the bowed head of Kwan Ching, who, every evening before the cold of winter drove him to his bed, was accustomed to look longingly at the picture, bidding the maiden good-night.

And when the matchmakers, go-betweens, relatives and friends came to suggest that he take a wife, naming over for him the beautiful ladies of that section of North China in which he lived, he shook his head sadly.

"There shall be no marriage for me, ever," he said softly. "For I love a lady who exists only in my dreams!"

His eyes wandered to the picture which hung on the wall of his cheerless study chamber.



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"Find me a maiden," he said at length, "who shall be as beautiful as the little lady in yonder picture and I will take her in marriage. For me there shall be no other. I love the picture woman and shall be true to her until I die. Find me one who has the face of the girl in yonder picture and the graceful perfections of the lady of my dreams and I shall wed her, and turn the face of the picture to the wall!"

The matchmakers stared at Kwan Ching aghast. Surely the man must be mad.

The picture was very old. The lady of the picture had perhaps been dead for centuries. Where, then, could they find her counterpart?

They tried to persuade Kwan Ching from his stubbornness, but Kwan Ching steadfastly shook his head. Find the counterpart of the picture, he told them; and they knew she could not be found. In the midst of the remonstrances, the gesticulations, one of the matchmakers raised his eyes, by chance, to the window.

"Look!" he shouted.

All the matchmakers looked. Then they fled from the study chamber. Kwan Ching raced to the window and peered out.

The matchmakers were beating the garden excitedly, looking under bushes, into tall trees—seeking, seeking. Finally, after a long time, they returned.

"What was it?" asked Kwan Ching.

One of the matchmakers took upon himself the rôle of spokesman.

"We saw a strange face at the window, Kwan Ching," he said. "It was not a woman's face, yet it was very like a woman's face."

A second matchmaker, excited so that he forgot the dictates of propriety, interrupted the speaker to make a startling statement: "It was the face of a white fox that peered in at the window!"

The white fox had fled from the window of Kwan Ching. She fled with the fleetness of the wind, for hers was the power which had grown with the centuries. When she had reached the open country beyond the village it had become quite dark. Lights were blinking in the darkness like fireflies.

The white fox was filled with sadness, wondering when the Empress of Heaven would see fit to release her from bondage.

Then without warning came a voice out of the darkness: "White Fox, you have suffered for over a thousand years. It is in my heart to release you from bondage and to allow you a brief period of happiness before you die."

The white fox made reply, for her long silence had

## THE WHITE FOX

suddenly broken. She knew the voice was the voice of the Empress of Heaven and that in its hearing she was given all power.

"I am ready," she replied. "What wouldst thou have me do?"

"You shall take the form of a young and beautiful maiden, fair as fair to the eyes of men. You shall marry the man of your own choosing, provided he be worthy; you shall live a life full of happiness and in the end shall die satisfied, aged and full of years."

"I am ready," replied the white fox.

"Go, then," said the voice, "and all power is yours."

Kwan Ching was talking with his servant before retiring.

"You love the lady of the picture," said the servant, who was very superstitious. "Why do you not talk to the picture every evening, telling her how much you love her? Perhaps a kind fairy will listen to your words and bring the lady of the picture to you."

Kwan Ching shook his head sorrowfully. It was impossible, of course, for there never could be a living woman as fair as his beloved. After smiling slightly, Kwan Ching raised his arms imploringly and addressed the picture as though it had been a living person.

"Always and always I shall love you," he said.

"You, but a picture though you are, are my heart's true mate. I may never have you. I shall go to my grave, however, faithful to you in word and deed; you are my ideal, which I may never realize. Would that the Empress of all the Heavens might grant me my one dearest wish—that you come to life and step forth from the picture into my arms!"

Steadfastly Kwan Ching watched the picture. His arms, extended toward the likeness of his unknown beloved, became rigid, waiting. His eyes almost started from his head. His heart began to pound with wild excitement. There was no fear in him, though a miracle was happening before his eyes—

For the outline of the little lady of ancient China, garbed in the costume of a forgotten dynasty, had suddenly moved; while a soft sigh, like a subdued breathing of a light wind of summer, had reached the ears of Kwan Ching. Rigid as a statue, Kwan Ching waited. Again the picture moved. A radiance that was almost blinding settled upon the room. Kwan Ching sat as one in a trance, still with his hands raised toward the likeness of his beloved. And out of the picture, heart of the blinding romance, stepped the little lady of his dreams.

Straight into his arms she came, to nestle there, while the arms of Kwan Ching were suddenly strong

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to hold her. Flesh and blood she was and her breath was warm on the flushed cheeks of her lover.

Kwan Ching and his best beloved told each other of their love. The hours fled swiftly by. The little lady of the picture convinced him that she was real, that she was flesh and blood and that, through a miracle, she had stepped down from the aged picture to nestle in his arms.

It was just before morning that she told him.

"It is only during night time that I may come to you. When sunrise crimson the eastern sky I must return. But I am with you always in the picture you have always worshiped; and you must contain yourself in patience until the evening, after sunset, when I shall come to you again."

At sunrise Kwan Ching looked dazedly at his empty arms. He raised his eyes to the picture on the wall, where the likeness of his best beloved had now resumed the place she had held for centuries. Her eyes held his for a moment, then grew still—and Kwan Ching's best beloved had become once more a picture.

Evening came and the sun dropped behind the western skyline—then the picture stirred. Later the servant came in, looked at the profile on the wall, kindled a fire at his master's bidding and left the lovers to their solitude, clasped in each other's arms.



When the servant had gone, Kwan Ching told his best beloved of his plan.

"I shall burn the picture," he said. "I cannot endure the endless days which must be passed without you here to comfort me. I talk to you in the picture, but you cannot answer me, cannot step down into my waiting arms. I cannot endure it."

Gently he thrust her from his arms. Her sweet perfume filled his nostrils, intoxicating him, filling all his being with a desire to have her always, to have her with him during daylight and darkness, during storm and strife, as long as they both should live.

"Please!" pleaded his best beloved. "Please do not burn the picture. I am afraid. I am afraid that catastrophe will rob us of the happiness a miracle has given us."

But Kwan Ching was obdurate. He had made his plan. He shut his ear to the pleadings of his best beloved, believing her vague fears groundless. He turned his back upon her, rushed to the wall, grasped the picture, tore it down, crumpled it in hands that suddenly were strong to rend and destroy, and threw the remnants of the picture on the flames where they caught instantly and were consumed.

"Mine, beloved!" he cried, turning. "Mine until

## THE WHITE FOX

we both shall die. Through daylight and darkness, storm and strife; nevermore shall you leave me."

But when he turned to gaze upon the exquisite form of his best beloved, she had vanished.

Standing in her place was a white fox whose eyes were like a woman's, filled with eternal sadness and with the infinite knowledge which has been the heritage of woman through endless, endless ages.

With a cry Kwan Ching flung an arm before his starting eyes. Lowering his arm again he stared at the white fox. Was it, after all, a hallucination? Did he not see, through the form of the white fox, the figure of his best beloved?

Did they not blend inexplicably, until Kwan Ching could not be sure whether it was fox or lady?

"It is a test—a test of worthiness!" Whence came the words? They were words without sound that beat against the heart of Kwan Ching like the delicate wings of imprisoned birds.

Kwan Ching raised his eyes to Heaven for a fleeting moment.

"I pray Your Majesty," he heard himself saying, "do not take my beloved from me!"

With a cry of anguish Kwan Ching sprang toward the swaying, strangely shifting form of the lady of the picture.

## LOTOS PETALS

"Whether you be fox or lady," he said, "my love must hold you always. Neither the Empress of Heaven nor the gods of earth shall take you from me—never!"

He clasped the figure in his arms. Gentle fingers caressed his cheeks. The touch of tiny finger tips, more loving than the touch of lips which is the right of lovers.

"Kwan Ching, thou hast proved thyself worthy!"

Kwan Ching thought that the words came from the lips of his best beloved, but he was not sure.

Of these things only was he sure: that he held his best beloved in his arms, that her sweet face was upturned to meet his own and that with the burning of the picture he need never again fear the sunrise. When the sun should come up again on the morrow and during all the countless morrows which would measure out the days of their life together, its golden rays would light life's pathway for them; and that for these two who loved so deeply there never again would be the sorrow and the heartbreak of parting.

When Kwan Ching's servant came with food there was no picture on the wall, no white fox to stand like a specter between Kwan Ching and happiness with his

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lady; but only two people who spoke to each other softly.

And departing softly the understanding servant left them there safe in each other's arms.





## A QUIET DAY WITH A CHINESE FAMILY

THE Chinese family I wish to describe is old-fashioned. Many of the things herein narrated have passed with the growth of New China. But old-fashioned Chinese still abound. Old Chinese who resent new ideas and cling to the old ones as the safest and best. To me these are the most interesting not only because they were the Chinese of my childhood but because they belong to an era that is swiftly passing. Some day soon there will be no old-fashioned Chinese, because all will have taken on the veneer of the West. It seems a pity, too, in many ways. Though I know that Western culture is a good thing for China, it is sad to see the old things pass.

The Chinese young bride must rise in the morning at the same time the horde of servants rise. This is because the bride must make herself ready to supervise



## A QUIET DAY WITH A CHINESE FAMILY

breakfast for mother-in-law, father-in-law and brothers- and sisters-in-law. The status of the bride is not an enviable one, but she bears it stoically, knowing that eventually a time is coming when she will be a mother-in-law and can avenge herself upon some luckless bride for indignities she now suffers.

The bride prepares herself, dresses carefully, then goes to the kitchen to make sure that the food is ready and properly cooked. Well she knows that if things are wrong she, as the bride, must account to the mother-in-law for derelictions.

When all is ready the Number One Boy goes to the door of Master's and Mistress' bedroom and calls out:

"Master! Mistress! It is time to arise!"

Mother-in-law and father-in-law take their time about it but do manage to get out of bed as servants bring in the washbowls for them. The washbowls are placed on separate stools for Master and Mistress, who seat themselves on yet other stools to wash their faces—while such servants as are admitted to the bedchamber stand by and watch or hold steaming towels ready against their needs.

The house is overrun with servants. Master and Mistress must never exert themselves. There are servants for everything. As I recall it, when I myself became a bride I had twenty-one servants in my house-

hold, most of whom were not only useless but in the way—but I had to have them because it was the custom.

The family repairs to breakfast, which is served on a huge circular table bare of tablecloth but polished until it reflects the faces of those seated about it. Breakfast consists of porridge, ham, noodles, soup and tea—always and forever tea! It is the duty of the bride to see that the plates of mother-in-law and father-in-law are kept heaping full, after which she must see that all the other in-laws are properly served. The bride may not eat with the in-laws. She may serve them, and be eternally and perpetually criticized by them, but must wait until they have finished eating before she herself may partake of food.

The whole family uses chopsticks. They have napkins, huge silken cloths with clasps at one corner. This clasp fastens in the neck of the gown and flows over the chest—so you see that your grandfather, of whom possibly you have occasionally been ashamed, has borrowed the habit of tucking his napkin into his collar from a people that is very old indeed.

Breakfast is no small meal. Everybody eats as much as possible. An amah (serving maid), or perhaps several of them, each holding one of the younger children, stand in doorways and watch the family at break-

## A QUIET DAY WITH A CHINESE FAMILY

fast, while their sharp ears are open perpetually for any chance scraps of gossip that may fall—all of which will be redigested later in the servants' quarters or traded off to the servants of visitors for like bits of gossip about the visitors themselves.

After breakfast the father-in-law and his son, husband of the bride, leave the house and the courtyard, enter their sedan chairs, carried by four coolies, and, with mounted outriders in the case of officials, repair to their respective *yamens*, or offices—which must always remain mysteries to the women of the household. Women are not supposed to know anything about business of any kind.

Then the quiet day begins! Father-in-law, of course, is the master of the household, and servants, wives, concubines, children—everybody—must walk and talk quietly while father-in-law is home.

When he leaves, restraint vanishes into the limbo of forgotten things. The children, of whom there may be almost any number, since the father may have several child-bearing concubines, go to school. In summer they simply repair to the summerhouse in the garden, where they are instructed by a man tutor, who is supposed to be very wise and dignified, though it is often difficult to achieve dignity in the midst of a dozen or so riotous children.

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In school the little scholars learn poetry, the Four Classics and how to paint the Chinese characters with the brush. To learn Chinese one must speak it, because—mandarin at least—it must be heard to be grasped, since the same word has a different meaning each way you say it, each word has at least four meanings. Naturally enough the little scholars have the idea that since they acquire knowledge by reciting their lessons aloud, the louder they shout the better they will learn.

Children of first wives and secondary wives are, figuratively, in the same status, though the children of the first wife have a certain preference that might not be readily apparent to the Westerner.

Each child has his or her own amah, and the job of each amah is to take the best possible care of the child she is watching. This duty extends through each and every hour of the day and night. Even at school, nominally under the tutorship of a man, the amahs are never absent, and if any amah feels that "her" child is not being fairly treated, is not getting his or her share of learning or has a voice too low to be heard in the general hubbub the amah steps in and a "quiet" day is advanced just so much further.

For if *this* amah claims that the child for whom *that* amah is responsible is beating her child out of her rightful share of knowledge, *that* amah immediately takes

## A QUIET DAY WITH A CHINESE FAMILY

issue with *this* amah and there is an endless clamor in which the pupils, all the amahs and the tutor take part before comparative quiet is restored. The life of a tutor, as may be seen, may be intensely exciting and he almost always abundantly earns his stipend.

There is no such thing as recess. The children do not seem to mind the backless benches and the tables with rough edges—four children to a table.

The house, empty of children, belongs to the women. The mother-in-law, her husband absent, is the head. There may be a grandmother, but she is no longer the nominal head. Everybody waits on her, pets her, caters to her. She is inquisitive to a vast degree and must be informed of all sorts of petty details that really do not concern her at all.

Usually, the children have scarcely started to school or, indeed, breakfast may not be over when the keepers of the courtyard gates begin shouting that a visitor is coming. This probably will be a woman, another mother-in-law, calling on the mistress of the house. The visitor comes early and stays all day and as late into the night as courtesy permits. She leaves only when she realizes that she must get *some* sleep in order to be ready bright and early to return again in the morning or to go calling on some other mother-in-law.

It is difficult to say what mothers-in-law talk about,



## LOTOS PETALS

and sometimes they don't talk but just sit and smoke, rock back and forth and drink tea. Always tea—and things to eat! The bride must receive the visitor, light her pipe or cigarette for her and entertain her until the mother-in-law of the household is ready to receive the guest. No matter how much the hostess may dislike the visiting mother-in-law she must be polite to her and must under no circumstances permit her to think she has outstayed her welcome.

But mothers-in-law discuss their pains and aches to begin with. Then they blame their pains and aches on the bride—who is standing by listening to it all—because she doesn't look after things properly. Then somebody has had a new pair of shoes made, has taken a new concubine—a very bad one always—or a concubine has given birth to twins. While this is going on—gossip, gossip, gossip—the servants brought along by the visitor are being entertained in the “lower house,” or the servants' quarters, by the servants of the hostess. Here the servants of the hostess pump the visiting servants for choice bits of gossip about their master and mistress, and tell tales out of school about their own master and mistress.

After the visitor has gone—a vast sigh of relief. The mistress calls in her servants, who have been entertaining her visitor's servants, and from them gets the

## A QUIET DAY WITH A CHINESE FAMILY

gossip about her visitor relayed through the visitor's servants. In the same manner the visitor pumps her servants about the host and hostess whose home she has just left.

Yes, families in China find things to talk about, and it is easy to understand why there are no secrets there.

Finally the lunch hour arrives. Father and son come home and a deep, solemn hush falls over all. Lunch is a heavy meal, eaten ceremoniously.

The silence in the house and courtyard begins when the gatekeepers call "Master arrives!" and continues until Master has departed again.

After Master has gone in the afternoon, blab school begins again and the mothers-in-law start their gossip where they left off. The bride looks after their wants, does some sewing—or whatever mother-in-law commands—and racks her brains to think of dainty dishes to please the palates of the in-laws. A pleasant but highly active life for the bride!

The house, garden and courtyard are a bedlam. Amahs who care for children who are too young to go to school get into arguments among themselves as to the relative merits of their children. Amahs who wish to go calling on other amahs employed by neighbors bring babes in arms to their mistress and brazenly inform her that the child—too young to make more than

ushy-gooley sounds!—desires to make the visit which the amah herself really desires to make. A harmless fiction which everybody understands and the amah gets permission because her charge desires the change of air!

All the time the visitor, or visitors—for many mothers-in-law may come at once to complicate matters and give the servants more to discuss!—are talking, talking, talking.

“My husband took another concubine yesterday. . . . She is simply terrible. . . . My son’s bride is awkward as an ox. . . . I’m sure this pain in my left side is from getting angry with her. . . . My husband’s second concubine has a new baby. . . . It looks like a little ape. . . . It reveals the lack of breeding of the mother!” And so on and so on all day.

I remember once when a visitor called, and was still talking at midnight, my father—who was a Manchu official and had little patience with this sort of Chinese courtesy—suggested she send a servant home for her bedding.

To go back for a moment. When the visitor arrives, if she comes in a ricksha, the home servants pay the ricksha coolie. If she comes in her own sedan chair “chow money” is given to the chair bearers. When the visitor has eaten a meal in the house she leaves money on the table for the servants in the house.

## A QUIET DAY WITH A CHINESE FAMILY

It is all very complicated and everybody seems to tip everybody else's servants, the only salvation being that one is thereby spared the necessity of tipping one's own. However, by judicious "squeeze," or "cumshaw," money secured by paying a few cents extra to tradesmen, then collecting the difference (servants do all the marketing), one's own manage to provide themselves with a great sufficiency in the way of tips.

Dinner is an elaborate, long-drawn-out affair. Everybody eats too much and tea is consumed in vast quantities. And after dinner . . . ! The house becomes a bedlam. Children get into fights. Immediately every amah steps in to take the part of her particular charge and this brings the various nursemaids into swift and aggressive combat.

Then the wives and concubines, at the peak of the bickering and argument, enter into the fuss, each one looking after the interests of her own particular children, and the result is an uproarious pandemonium.

There is only one living person who can settle this: She is the mother-in-law. She enters into the matter, decides on the merits of the case by weighing the evidence—presented by each and every one of the participants, all talking at the same time—and renders her decision, which is final until the discussion waxes hot again.

Grandma is not supposed to be interested in the mat-

ter, but she sits by, missing nothing, her eyes busy, her lips moving endlessly. Her voice is not heard in the discussion because she is too old and weak.

Bedtime?

Just when is that? One or two o'clock in the morning perhaps. Children go to bed piecemeal, as it were, one here and two there, who immediately go to sleep—after having torn up the bed a few times and piled it on top of one another to the tune of many and lusty battle cries—while the children not yet sleepy carry on in the dining-room, the parlor, the kitchen—and on the roof and walls if not properly watched.

To go back again if you don't mind: when the visitor comes she asks at once after the children, and the polite thing is to be very eager to show them to her. A servant rushes out to the school, breaks it up without apologies, makes sure that the children are properly starched and presented to the visitor. At such times they are so proper it almost hurts, and the repression of a few minutes in the presence of a visitor . . . well, the poor tutor will pay for what they have suffered at the hands of visitors who *will* make comments about shiny faces and other matters that visitors discuss as though the children did not understand the language! Ah, I remember . . . but that's a long story, my own, which I need much time and space to tell about.



## A QUIET DAY WITH A CHINESE FAMILY

The day draws on to a close. The visitor and the hostess are talking.

Visitor: "I *must* be going!"

Hostess: "But I simply cannot permit you to leave so soon!"

V: "But I have been here all day!"

H: "Impossible! You just came!"

V: "All day, I say! I must be going!"

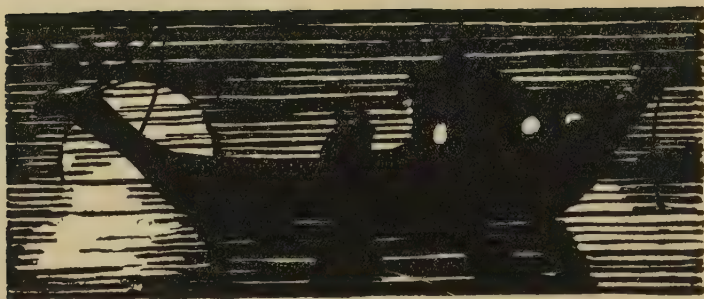
H: "But I shall feel very badly if you go now!"

(Hostess has been wishing for fourteen hours that Visitor would really make up her mind to leave!)

V: "Nevertheless, I *must* be going!"

Here in the United States, Father, about the fortieth time this has been repeated, would probably come to the head of the stairs and say: "For the love of Heaven, go while you have the idea!"





## GOLDEN BELLS

THE wind of North China sang a chill song as it scurried around the sharp corners of the prisonhouse of Chang Hu, the ambitious student. There was death in the wind, for winter was approaching. There was no paper in the windows, no fire kept back the march of the biting cold. An oil lamp with a floating wick of cotton held position on the rough table, which, aside from the stiff bench on which Chang Hu sat, was the only article of furniture. Bitter, biting cold, and a lamp that gave off cold light, trying on eyes that were narrowed in concentration. Chang Hu, the ambitious student, drew his scanty gown more tightly about his frame, drew his neck down into his hunched up shoulders, and pored the more earnestly over weighty tomes, Chinese classics he must know by heart to realize his mighty dreams. In his concentration he strove to for-

## GOLDEN BELLS

get the cold, and the fact that there was no money with which to buy food.

The prisonhouse of Chang Hu—a prisonhouse because the student must cloister himself from the world—was in a little village in the far interior, many many *li* from the mighty Capital City of the Middle Kingdom, toward whose gates Chang Hu had set the eyes of his ambition. In this little village, a silent, somber place of many mud huts, each as like its neighbors as peas in a pod, was a mud hut that was larger than its fellows. Inside this mud hut there were warmth and coziness, for it was the dwelling place of the King of Beggars, whose revenue was so great that he could afford corn stalks for his roof, and wood to stoke the fires which kept the winter cold away.

The King of Beggars had a daughter. This daughter of his was called Golden Bells, and she was the most beautiful little lady in the village of the mud huts, where there were many little ladies famous for their beauty. But she was the daughter of a beggar, and nothing in the world could change that solemn fact. A beggar's daughter she would be all her days, and a beggar, though he be the King of Beggars, is less than the dust beneath the feet of the affluent—and the ambitious.

The King of Beggars, appointed by acclamation, was not like other beggars, for he never went forth into the highways and byways seeking alms. He left beggary to his followers of whom there were a goodly number, and daily from each he took for his own a single copper *cash*. That copper *cash* was the price the beggars paid for the protection of the Beggar King, whose word had weight with lawgivers and magistrates, with soldiers and with princes. A copper *cash* daily from each of a host of beggars.

Golden Bells wished for romance, but she was a daughter of a beggar. The wind whistled and shrieked about the mud hut. The obese father of Golden Bells grunted his contentment as he stared into the fires which kept the cold away. Golden Bells sighed. Her father heard the sigh.

"You are mooning again, Golden Bells!" cried her father. "Why are you not content with what I have given you? We have fire, when others have no fire. We have food to eat, and glazed paper in the windows to keep away the cold. There are countless thousands in China who have nothing, not even roofs above their heads! Yet you sigh, and wish for the moon! Go bring wood for the fires. Perhaps the bitter cold beyond the door will bring realization that life is good to you!"

## GOLDEN BELLS

Golden Bells, wrapping her coverings tightly about her, escaped gladly from the cozy home of the King of Beggars, which was less than the poorest home because it held no romance but only the ceaseless whining of the King of Beggars, whose long-nailed fingers opened and closed constantly, as though mentally he counted the copper *cash* his followers would next day deliver into his itching palms. She closed the door behind her, and the wind came down in fury, moaning, crying with the voices of wandering souls, to enhance the roses in the cheeks of Golden Bells, and to cause her to wrap more tightly about her the quilted coverings purchased by the copper *cash* of her father's followers. Moving awkwardly, swaying to and fro like a lily in the wind, because her feet had been broken and bound—her father's one concession to his daughter's matchless beauty—Golden Bells went forth into the biting chill of the night, her face turned toward the black tunnel of the village street, at the farther end of which lived another obese man who dealt in wood, and whose prices were so high that only beggar kings might purchase, so high that ambitious students of the ancient classics might only covet, and draw closer about them the frayed garments of their poverty.

Golden Bells paused, swaying on her bound feet. Through the darkness she had seen a flickering light



that was like a beacon, because Golden Bells yearned for romance. It was the only light in the village, for all windows were closed, and light came but dully through the glazed paper which the villagers used in lieu of glass. Besides, the village was asleep, for the hour was late. Only the obese dealer in wood would be awake, wrapped tightly in many coats because he would have no fire, since wood for his fires might be sold for profits. He would be awake, listening for the sound of approaching footsteps which might turn in, for the knocking on his door of knuckles containing copper *cash* for his fat coffers. This, Golden Bells knew. The flickering light was unusual, a beacon in the darkness. The heart of Golden Bells thrummed swiftly in her tiny breast. She hesitated long, as became a maiden of virtue and discretion. Then, swaying on her bound feet, she turned her flushed face toward the beacon which lured her.

Inside his prisonhouse Chang Hu drew deeper into his scanty gown, his almond eyes glued to the almost-last page in the last of the weighty tomes of the ancient classics. His days of relentless servitude were almost over. Soon he would have his examinations. After that—Pei-Ching, the Capital of the Empire, wealth, renown, and public approbation.

“Aren’t you cold?”

## GOLDEN BELLS

Chang Hu looked up, somewhat startled.

Framed in the window of his prisonhouse, where no windowpanes were, was a face that was very tiny, with luminous eyes, dark lashes that were like the wings of little birds, lips like the red petals of some gorgeous, dainty flower, a forehead that might have been sculptured by the hands of an artist—the face of the most beautiful little lady Chang Hu had ever seen.

Chang Hu, frowning slightly because he had been interrupted, shivered as thus reminded of his poverty, of his lack of fire, of the fact that his single window held no glazed paper to keep out the bitter cold.

“Yes,” he said at last, “I am cold. It is not pleasant to be without money.”

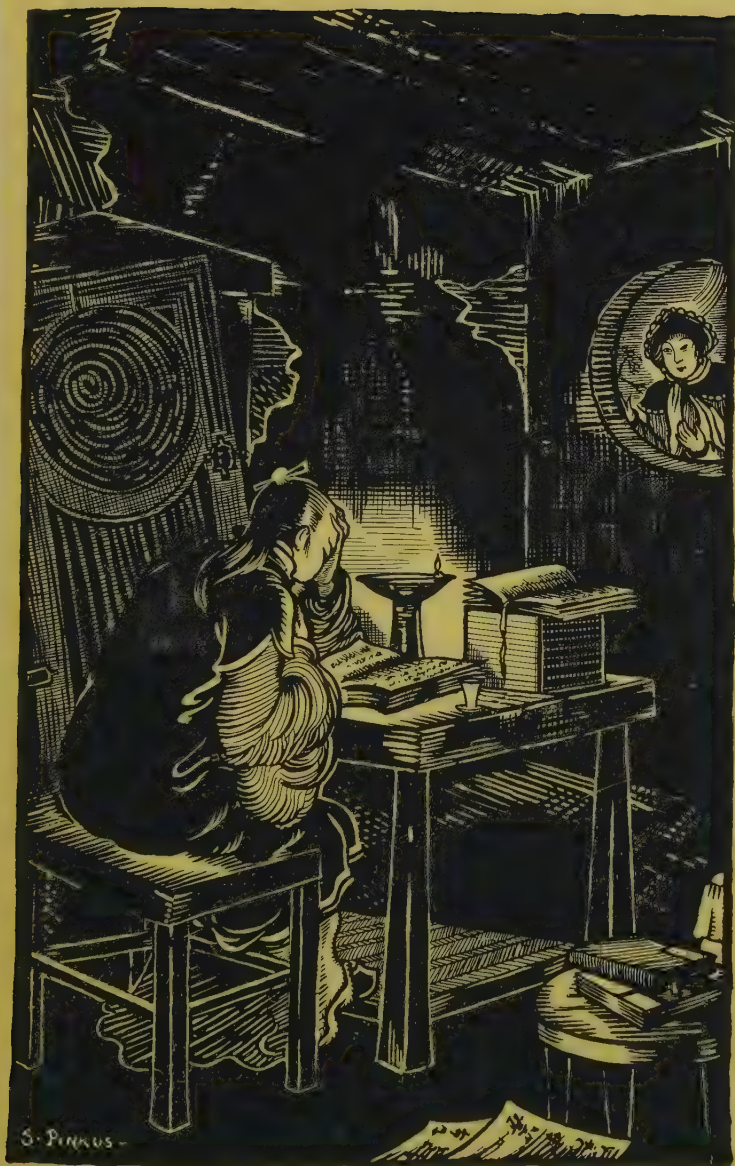
“You are poor, then?” asked Golden Bells.

Her heart was beating madly. This was not right conduct for a little lady of ancient culture. What would this man—who was great for all his poverty, because he spoke the dialect so well, could read from huge books—think of a girl who could be so forward?

“I am very poor,” replied Chang Hu. “But I shall not be poor much longer! I have almost completed my studies. Soon I shall have my examinations. I shall pass them easily, because I have worked hard and mastered my subjects.”

A great man, indeed! And good to look upon.

The heart of little Golden Bells thumped madly inside her breast, as though it were a bird with wings, a bird that struggled to free itself from captivity. Golden Bells wondered if this great man, who was so good to look upon, could see the mad beating of her heart. But, save that she kept him from his studies, causing him to shift in his seat impatiently, the great man seemed to notice her not at all. Aghast at her own temerity, but driven by something inside her that was stronger than the old traditions, Golden Bells left the window, circled the corner of Chang Hu's prisonhouse, lifted the latch on the rattling door, and entered the cheerless, tiny abode of the ambitious student—who gasped when he saw the richness of her clothing. Student though he might be, outside the things of this world because his ambitions made him forget material things, Golden Bells drew the student out of himself, drew his eyes to her own, where they were held for many moments, held until the student, forgetting his classics, noting only the exquisite beauty of this little creature who had come to him out of the wind and the darkness, noted the rising and falling of her breast, and knew that a miracle had happened—a miracle he himself had caused, yet which stirred him not at all. Poverty and cold and hunger do not nurture romance. Ambition, ambition that may lead one out of



Framed in the window of his prisonhouse, where no windowpanes were, was a face that was very tiny





## GOLDEN BELLS

the pit, yes; romance seldom, save as means to an end. But Chang Hu, because he recognized the working of a miracle, because his was the vanity which is the heritage of all mankind, did not permit this little lady to know his feelings. She was, after all, only a woman.

"I am Golden Bells," she said simply.

"I am Chang Hu, a student of the classics."

Golden Bells made a little curtsey. She moved to stand behind Chang Hu, to peer over his shoulders at the open page of the classics, whose sprawling characters meant nothing to her, because they were weird miracles of another kind. As she looked, and comprehended that this man Chang Hu could understand these strange characters, she marveled anew at his greatness, and her tiny hands, like moths which flutter about a flame, came to rest for an infinitesimal instant upon the shoulders of Chang Hu. Chang Hu looked down at the hands, snow upon the shoulders of his gown, looked up into the tiny face.

"I am daughter of the King of Beggars!" she said defiantly.

Chang Hu stiffened. Golden Bells, sensing his sudden aversion, knowing its cause, stifled an unmaidenly sob, turned, tottering on her bound feet, gained the sagging door and fled into the night. With a sigh, which might have meant anything, Chang Hu turned

back to his classics. The wind moaned about his prison-house. The door rattled in its sagging casements. Chang Hu drew deeper into his gown, tucked his feet under him for greater warmth. Once he looked up at the cold window, now frost bordered, but the window was empty, save for the frost, and the moaning of the cold which came in. Chang Hu shook his head impatiently and turned back to the pages of his beloved classics.

A long time later his door opened, this time without warning, and into the dull circle of light cast by his oil lamp of the floating cotton wick, stalked an obese creature.

"I am King of the Beggars," said the obese man, disdaining the usual preliminaries demanded by custom. "My daughter, Golden Bells, has been with you in this house, alone! You must take her in marriage, in order that my house be not dishonored!"

"But," began Chang Hu, aghast, "she came of her own free will! I did not ask her to come, did not know she was here until she was actually inside! Besides, I do not even know her!"

Not a muscle moved on the round moon face of the King of Beggars.

"You go soon to Pei-Ching for your examinations, do you not?" he asked.

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Chang Hu nodded, wondering whither the question led.

"I am King of the Beggars," repeated the obese man, "and my word has weight with lawgivers, statesmen, rulers and princes. A word from me—"

Chang Hu groaned. Then his head sank into his hands as he lost himself in thought. Golden Bells would bring a good dowry, and Chang Hu was very poor. In Pei-Ching they would never know she had been daughter of a king of beggars. But they would! They always knew. It would require many copper *cash* for the long contemplated journey to Pei-Ching. The obese man, who was thus ridding himself of a mooning daughter whose care required the expenditure of many copper *cash*, waited patiently, saying no word. Chang Hu, after a long time, raised his head from his hands.

"I will marry your daughter," he said.

So—

They were married. Golden Bells had found romance, of a kind. She worshiped Chang Hu. Chang Hu tolerated Golden Bells. He could never forget that she was the daughter of a king of beggars. She was beautiful, ravishingly beautiful, bringing moreover a good dowry to her husband, but she was the daughter of a king of beggars. Chang Hu never could forget that one solemn, incontrovertible fact.

Chang Hu went to Pei-Ching, taking his fragile bride. He passed his examinations with high honor. He was ordered to Tientsin to become magistrate of the Province of Chihli. With him went Golden Bells. They went my boat, with tiny gunboats in convoy. Golden Bells was garbed in the finest money could buy, for though she was, and would ever remain, a beggar king's daughter, she was also the wife of a provincial magistrate.

In the retinue of Chang Hu, the new magistrate, was a friend whom Chang Hu had made in Pei-Ching, a friend whom he had grown to trust, and whom he was taking with him to Tientsin, to shower him with honors and office in the name of friendship. The two were much together. Golden Bells remained in the background, as became a dutiful wife. The new friend of Chang Hu whispered much in the ear of Chang Hu, and his whispers had to do with a new magistrate's violation of custom—in keeping by him a wife who was daughter to a king of beggars.

It was late evening. No sound could be heard save the swirling of the muddy waters of the Pei Ho under the counter of the palatial junk which bore Chang Hu to his new responsibility, no sound save the swirling of the muddy water, and the muffled chanting of the

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coolies who manned the heavy sweeps. Under an awning sat Golden Bells, at the feet of Chang Hu, who smoked imperturbably and said never a word, because he was deep in thought, pondering on things which had been whispered into his ears by the friend he was taking with him to Tientsin.

"You are not happy, Chang Hu?" said Golden Bells softly.

Chang Hu shifted impatiently.

"Yes, I am happy," he said, "for fame is mine now, and money."

"But still," persisted Golden Bells, "you are not happy. Is it because your wife is the daughter of a king of beggars?"

Chang Hu shrugged and remained silent, but he might as well have shouted his thoughts, and his affirmation, from the housetops. Golden Bells, because she loved this man, and saw in him all the perfections, her figure of romance, knew that he lied. Knew, too, that he wished to be rid of her. Knew that, even though her leaving might make him happy, leave him she never could, because she loved him. For many moments she sat at his feet, thoughtful, her eyes very sad as they gazed up at the westward-coursing moon whose light shed weird radiance on the face of the Pei Ho. Finally, after a very long time, she rose unstead-



ily upon her bound feet, swaying as she took the few mincing steps necessary to place her behind Chang Hu.

"You do not love me, Chang Hu," she said sadly. "But you—I shall love you always! Do not send me away, and some day I shall make you love me, as I love you."

Golden Bells once more forgot the dictates of cultured propriety, which taboos display of affection, and placed her arms about the neck of Chang Hu, pressed her slender body against his broad back, strained her figure of romance against her. Her hands lay against the front of his rich gown like fragile petals from a magic flower. Chang Hu looked down at the hands, but for him they held no beauty, since they belonged to a woman who, be she ever so beautiful, remained now as always the daughter of a man not highly born.

With a savage lurch of his whole body he flung Golden Bells from him, came to his feet, mouthing savage indignation, his hand outthrust to seize the swaying person of Golden Bells. Golden Bells, seeing the castle of her romance tumbling in ruins about her ears, was yet loath to see that romance crumbling, and strove to stay the wreckage with her fragile hands. She clung to Chang Hu, who strove to cast her from him. She had served her purpose. She could now do nothing for Chang Hu, who was to take over the important

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office of provincial magistrate. So they struggled there, at the low rail of the junk. Chang Hu flung Golden Bells from him again and again. If the noise of their struggles attracted attention, no one paid them heed. The coolies at the sweeps noticed nothing, being only coolies, who must not meddle in the affairs of their masters.

Golden Bells staggered away from Chang Hu, tottering on her poor bound feet. She swayed toward the low rail. Chang Hu, noting whither she swayed, made no effort to stay her swaying. She struck the rail, her arms still stretched out to Chang Hu, hesitated there for a moment and toppled over into the muddy flood without a sound. For many moments Chang Hu, who had stepped to the rail, gazed over into the swirling tide. For many moments, precious moments, he waited. No sound came from the face of the waters. No form broke the swirling surface. Still Chang Hu hesitated.

Then he whirled from the rail and raised his voice in a shout that seemed to be filled with heartbreak and sorrow.

"Quick!" he cried. "Halt the junk! Turn back and make search! Golden Bells has fallen overboard—by accident!"

The junk was halted. The junk turned back. The other little boats in the convoy strove with might and main to assist. They scoured the face of the Pei Ho for an hour.

But Golden Bells had disappeared, because Chang Hu had hesitated quite too long, and the searchers did not find her, as far as Chang Hu knew.

But Golden Bells, who would know romance before she died, had not drowned, though she had come very near drowning. There was another important vessel in the convoy. It belonged to the Governor of the Province of Chihli. Golden Bells, who was so dainty that the waters of the Pei Ho refused her, was swept to the junk of the Governor. Strong hands reached down and assisted her aboard and took her before the Governor, who looked at her silently, and sent for his wife, whom he worshiped, despite the fact that she had given him no children to worship at his grave.

"Why did you try to commit suicide, child?" asked the Governor quietly.

Golden Bells hung her head.

"Whence are you?" he then asked.

Yet Golden Bells made no answer.

"Who are your parents?" came the next question.

Golden Bells shook her head.

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"You have no parents," said the Governor softly, after a long thoughtful pause. "We have no children. Will you not come to us, then, and be our daughter? I am Governor of Chihli!"

This last very proudly. It was a great honor to be governor of a province.

Golden Bells hesitated. She was very thoughtful. To be daughter of a provincial governor! Chang Hu, who had cast her off, who had not saved her from the voracious Pei Ho, would be only a magistrate, far below the Governor in dignity. Golden Bells, her thoughts racing into the future, nodded. The Governor's wife took charge of her, caused her to be decked in dry, new raiment of great richness, put on by the skilled hands of many faithful servants; and when the convoy reached Tientsin she became officially the daughter of the Governor.

Long before they reached Tientsin she had told her parents her story, had named Chang Hu as the man who had cast her off, because she had been the daughter of a king of beggars, and had confessed that she loved him still, and would return to him if only he would ask it.

The Governor took the matter under mental advisement, telling no one of his thoughts, least of all Chang Hu, who became magistrate upon arrival at Tientsin—

a very efficient magistrate, to whom all paid honor, unhampered by the unwelcome attentions of a woman lowly born. As he increased in power, fame and affluence, he began to look about him, seeking new worlds to conquer. He went often to the house of the Provincial Governor, where he saw no ladies, of course, because custom decrees that the faces and persons of ladies of the family be hidden from view when outsiders are received into the domicile.

Chang Hu, of easy conscience, had forgotten Golden Bells, save that now and again she visited him in his dreams, causing him to shift uncomfortably in his sleep, mutter slightly, and awaken sometimes to berate his cook for having prepared his food so badly as to cause nightmares.

It was odd that Chang Hu's friend should have been selected by the Provincial Governor as his go-between. Perhaps the Governor had a sense of humor. Or perhaps the Three Old Ladies who spin the web of Fate took a hand. However it may have happened, the fact remains that Chang Hu's friend was selected as his go-between, and in that traditional capacity he came to Chang Hu, the magistrate.

"You have no wife, Chang Hu," began the go-between.



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Chang Hu stiffened. What was the meaning of his friend's words? Had he not rid himself of Golden Bells at the express suggestion of this same friend? Was that friend now come to question him as to the manner of the passing of Golden Bells, at this late hour, when Golden Bells, asleep in the muddy bosom of the Pei Ho, had become less even than a vagrant memory? Chang Hu waited. This friend had never served him ill. There was something else behind the question.

"I have no wife, as you know," he replied at length.

"The Governor bids me ask you if you have ever been married," continued Chang Hu's friend. "I answered for you. I told him you had never been married. He desires you to add to my assurance, your own."

"But why does he ask?" said Chang Hu after a time.

"The Governor has a marriageable daughter, Chang Hu," replied the go-between. "You have found favor in his eyes. He wishes you to take his daughter in marriage."

Chang Hu was filled with pleasurable excitement. This was more, far more, than he had dared hope. He had not known that the Governor had a daughter, had never dared hope for good fortune like this. How

very fortunate it was, indeed, that there was no Golden Bells to hamper his ambitions, thrice grasping now that he had already traveled so far along the road to fame and affluence. It were best, though, not to make affirmation with unseemly haste. He hesitated, but not too long—and his friend, who knew the story of Golden Bells, knew that her spirit would never come back to forbid the marriage—reported to the Governor that Chang Hu would take his daughter in marriage. The Governor nodded gravely. The go-between reported back to Chang Hu that the Governor was pleased. A date was set for the ceremony.

The Governor told the tale to his daughter.

"Do you still love this man?" he asked.

"I do," said Golden Bells softly. "But he has treated me shamefully. I would make him suffer as he has made me suffer. He has been inside this house, and I have heard him deny it when you asked him if he ever had a wife. He has denied it officially, through his go-between. I want him, yes; but I would have him take me in pain and suffering."

Again the wise old Governor took the matter under advisement.

"Hum-m-m," he said finally. "We shall see. Most assuredly we shall see!"

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As the date of the wedding approached there were many people in a fever of excitement. Chang Hu was palpitant with excitement, since this was a greater honor than he had ever dared hope for. Golden Bells was as wildly excited as she had been when her real father, the King of Beggars, had come back to her from the prisonhouse of Chang Hu, to report that Chang Hu would take her in marriage. Chang Hu's friend was excited, because he was by nature a parasite, and believed that out of this union would grow other emoluments for himself, because he was a friend of Chang Hu. The Governor was pleased, mildly amused, because he saw that Fate, her threads manipulated by his own long-nailed fingers, was working in a strange way her wonders to perform. If the shadow of Golden Bells came to plague the spirit of Chang Hu, no one ever knew it, not even Chang Hu's parasite friend. Golden Bells was dead, and forgotten—and Chang Hu was to marry a governor's daughter. Up the rungs of the ladder-of-honor thus placed for him, Chang Hu might mount to the very top—and Chang Hu was ambitious, becoming day by day more self-seeking.

Marriages of convenience. The bridegroom never saw the bride's face, until after the marriage, until that part of the ceremony where he sat with her upon the edge of the marriage bed, when custom decreed that

the bridegroom lean forward toward the bride, and pull back the scarlet silk veil which hid her loveliness—or her imperfections. Chang Hu was unworried. The daughter of a governor would be beautiful. There would be a large dowry—and the woman was a governor's daughter. Those two facts would balance any imperfections, any lack of beauty in the bride.

So the days passed. Then came the ceremony.

The bride was brought to her husband. She had a retinue of many servants. Chang Hu, who knew the ceremony, all the complicated ritual, noted that all the servants carried willow switches, of the thickness of a little woman's finger—of the thickness of the middle finger of Golden Bells. But he refused to think of Golden Bells. She was dead. She had never *been* really. Chang Hu was to marry the daughter of a governor.

They brought the woman to him. They sat together on the side of the marriage bed. Chang Hu noticed that he himself sat upon part of his bride's clothing, and smiled to himself. Old as tradition, old as marriage, this business of sitting on the marriage bed, and the unveiling. Chang Hu was to be master in his own home, because, in sitting down together, his bride of the invisible face had sat down first, so that he sat upon the hem of her gown. The watchers noticed.

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Chang Hu, according to the sign, was to be master in his own household.

Chang Hu, Golden Bells entirely forgotten, was palpitant with joy. He approved of the fragile grace of his bride. He waited, in a fever of excitement, for her to speak, knowing before she spoke that her voice would be like the voice of waters flowing over clean white pebbles. But she did not speak. She waited. Chang Hu noted the rising and falling of her breast. Excited, too, was the bride.

"Your grace is as the grace of white lilies," he began.

And his bride made reply in a voice that stirred Chang Hu profoundly. It came up to all his expectations. It was a voice of golden beauty, like the tinkling of tiny golden bells. He stirred restlessly. Golden Bells—

Golden Bells was no more. Why, then, should he think of her?

"You have no other wife?" said the voice.

"I have no other," replied Chang Hu. "I have traveled much. I have been many places. But there has come none whom I could love, until you came. After you I could love no other. Your grace is as the grace of lilies. The moon is ashamed in your presence, hiding her head because your radiance outshines her



own. Flowers droop before you, knowing themselves lacking in beauty—”

“You will love me, cherish me, always, Chang Hu?”

Bowing, Chang Hu replied that as long as life lasted he would be faithful and true, that there never would be another to take the place of this graceful daughter of his governor. Still the bosom of the bride rose and fell. Chang Hu was in a very fever of anticipation. He half raised his hand to thrust aside the veil which covered the loveliness of his wife. More precious than rubies, a woman with a voice so sweet—

“Beat him!”

Chang Hu was filled with horror. His whole body recoiled from the new note in the voice of his bride. The servants fell upon him, beating him with the willow switches, beating him until he cried for mercy, and afterward. They beat him until he groveled on the floor, begging that they spare him. His bride sat on the bed, watching the proceeding unmoved. No one in all the gathering moved to stay the hands of the servants. The beating lasted until every bone and muscle in Chang Hu’s body cried out in protest. Then it was that his bride, with a cry of pity, stooped above the man at her feet, stayed the hands of the servants with a graceful gesture of lily-like hands.

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And Chang Hu, bewildered, wondering what sort of wife he had taken to his bosom, raised a shaking hand and thrust back the veil which hid the loveliness, or the imperfections, of his bride.





### WAS KIPLING RIGHT?

"EAST is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet!" How true that was when it was written; today, however, I am sure that it is no longer quite as true as it once was, and in some ways I am sorry. I am going to tell these ways, and why I am sorry; let the chips fall where they may. I feel that I have a certain right to be heard, because I know something of both sides of the age-old controversy.

I began such career as I have enjoyed as First Lady-in-Waiting to Her Majesty Tzu Hsi, the great Dowager Empress of China. She hated foreigners with a deep and all-abiding hatred, as a perusal of history dealing with the terrible Boxer Uprising will prove. From this you will immediately deduce that Her Majesty did not make me her favorite because I had a leaning toward the things of the Occident! Not at all! I understood her, and she was China!

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But before going to court I had lived with my father in Japan, where he was Minister after the China-Japan War. I was educated in Paris for the most part, and reared by my father as an Occidental, so that when I returned to China to take my place at the Manchu court, it was almost as though I had been a foreigner, as out of place as Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee at the court of King Arthur. Yet I became Her Majesty's favorite.

I say this entirely without egotism, merely to prove my right to make the remarks I intend to make in the course of this article—and because it is the dearest wish of my life to see the growth of better understanding between China and the United States.

Will that understanding ever come? I believe so. In some ways I am glad, in others I am sorry. I hate to see the passing of the old ceremonious Chinese customs, though to me they were almost as irksome as they were to foreigners who experienced them before their passing.

China, of course, understands the United States far better than the United States understands China. This is a truism, and I can hear my readers say plainly:

"Well, why not? Why should *we* bother? Since we are the superior race, why should they not try to understand us, rather than the other way around?"

I can hear these questions, and must confess that they find a certain echo in my own sympathies, because I myself am essentially of the Occident. But suppose we pursue the matter a bit deeper, and let it be settled on the evidence; allow comparisons to speak for themselves.

I once tried an experiment. I had a nice young American friend, of good family, excellent appearance, and well mannered. I had a Chinese friend of about the same age, with everything to recommend him, with the added qualification that he spoke excellent English, thus removing the biggest barrier to complete understanding, that of language.

I introduced the two. At first they seemed to get on famously. Each came to my home when he so desired, and there they met almost constantly. Gradually I could see that the novelty was wearing off, and that they were getting on each other's nerves. My test, it appeared, was approaching the climax.

My Chinese friend finally spoke to me about it.

"What," he asked, "does he want with me? He comes to my house, smokes my cigars, criticizes my servants, makes himself at home. I don't mind it, if he really regards himself as my friend. But does he? Or is he planning to use me as a good thing?"

I knew instantly that he would never have asked



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such questions as these regarding any Chinese of my acquaintance whom I might have introduced to him. If a Chinese goes to the house of a friend, and makes himself at home, without an invitation of any kind, he pays his host the highest compliment in his power. While in the home of his host he makes it his home; tells the cook how he likes his food prepared, tells the chauffeur to bring around the car, charges the gasoline to his host, uses his host's shaving gear, and stays as long as he likes, to say nothing of borrowing such money as he needs, which he returns whenever he can, or not at all, depending upon how he feels about it. There is never a scrap of paper as surety between them. But when the visitor was an American, the Chinese immediately began to wonder.

Then my American young friend approached me on the matter.

"He's awfully queer, isn't he? He doesn't let me into his confidence; he seems very much reserved with me. Yet when his Chinese friends call there is nothing he won't do for them!"

It was useless to get the two together to arrive at some basis of understanding, but *I* understood, and explained the matter to them separately.

It was merely that each was born to a different custom.

The Chinese is naturally shy with foreigners. The foreigner is lordly, and with the air of always intending to have his own way. There is reason in plenty for this, and my Chinese friend referred to above was acting according to the experience of his people when he asked those questions. Chinese have learned from long experience that the foreigner regards them as "China-men"—a name by the way which every Chinese detests!—of an inferior race, and only cultivates them in order to use them.

The Chinese knows this. The foreigner proves it by his actions. And mutual understanding comes up against a stone wall. If anybody tries to scale the wall, it is the Chinese, because the foreigner, being superior, sees no reason why he should come half way.

I took an American friend to dinner at the home of Chinese friends. Here were the different customs plainly seen. In foreign countries, servants keep out of the dining-room, except when actually serving; in old-fashioned Chinese homes they line up apart from the table and wait for orders. Naturally, they hear everything that is said, and their eyes miss nothing; but then, the Chinese has no secrets to hide! And it is the custom for servants to stand close by in case they are needed.

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My friend stood it for a little time, then he turned to me.

"I can't eat with these slant-eyed mummies staring at me that way! Why doesn't the host send them to the kitchen, where they belong?"

"Shhh!" I replied. "These people understand English, some of them! In Chinese families it is the custom for the servants to remain near the table. Would you have them change all that, merely because I have brought *you* here, where you would not be admitted if you had not come with me? If your Chinese host had dinner with you, where you have a habit of keeping your servants in the kitchen, would you bring them out and line them up in Chinese fashion, just because you had a Chinese guest? Most certainly not, and you would resent it were your host to make any comment on your failure! And in this case, *he* might be resentful."

Personally, I did not myself care so much for goggling servants, with ears big to drink in every word, which would presently be repeated all over Peking as choice morsels of gossip; but I did not quarrel with the custom for that reason. I doubt, however, if my American friend would ever be entirely at ease in that Chinese house.

However, as an interpolation let me say this: many

Americans, of long residence in China, have many Chinese friends, whom they value highly, and by whom they are valued—because they have reached a common ground of understanding, which is a matter of the heart, and not of epidermal pigmentation.

Another instance. I knew of a mere acquaintance-ship between a young Chinese and a young American. As I recall it, they met in my home, rather casually. Neither made, or tried to make, an impression on the other.

They parted, and met again in Mukden, Manchuria. My Chinese friend reported back to me what had happened. He stepped off the train in Mukden, and encountered the American in the Yamato Hotel. He recalled himself, and the following conversation took place:

“I am glad to see you!” said the Chinese, with the utmost sincerity. “Won’t you have dinner with me?”

My Chinese friend could see, he told me, that the American was ill at ease at the question, but since the Chinese could see no reason for the uneasiness, he persisted in his invitation.

“As a matter of fact,” said the American, “I would like very much to have dinner with you, for I frankly like you! But the truth is, I am unable to return your hospitality!”

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"But I am not asking you to dine with me because I wish you to return the dinner! I had no such idea at all! I ask you because I desire your company, and we are friends!"

"But I don't care to accept hospitality I cannot return."

"Nonsense! That is just an idea, and any Chinese would feel insulted if you made such a reply to his request for your company at dinner. Why do you feel this way?"

"Because . . . because . . . well, the truth is that I have practically no money at all!"

"I have plenty in my pocket. How much do you need?"

"But I wouldn't think of borrowing from you."

"We are friends, are we not?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Then tell me how much you need!"

"Well, I could use a couple of hundred!"

"Two hundred dollars would not take you very far. I can easily spare you five hundred, and would be most happy to do so."

"It is very good of you, and I will give you my note for it. I have no security, and an IOU is the best I can do."



"If your IOU is good, so is your word," replied the Chinese. "I don't wish your IOU!"

However, the American insisted upon tendering his IOU, which the Chinese promptly destroyed. Later the American paid, of course.

"I thought nothing of it," said the Chinese to me when he told me the story, "for I understand the American mode of thought. I knew he would repay me, and I wouldn't have minded especially if he hadn't; but I didn't want his IOU. It spoiled a friendly transaction between friends. However, had it been *I* who needed two hundred dollars, he would have asked me what I wanted it for, criticized me for borrowing, made me feel my inferiority because of lack of funds, would have jewed me down to a hundred—and would have required my IOU with ample security!"

Is the point clear? Chinese eternally borrow among themselves without a scrap of paper to show for such loans, and friendship suffers not one whit if payment is postponed until the end of time. Unbusinesslike? Yes, but something wholesome and human about it, far transcending the mere virtue of "business."

As I say, I have a distinct leaning toward Westernism. For two decades I have felt most at home among Americans, who for the most part, after the first shock wears off, seem to forget that I am actually an Orien-

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tal. I do not say that China is filled with people like myself, for my experience is unique. I have brushed shoulders with royalty so frequently that I am more or less blasé. I am at home anywhere, no matter how important or stiff-necked the occasion. I am a cosmopolite, a statement which is necessary to give point to the story I am now going to relate.

Some one of my many American friends gave a letter of introduction to one of her friends, addressed to me in China. That letter was presented to me as a matter of course, and while many of my friends were always sending China visitors to me until it became rather a nuisance, I never once refused to see people bearing such credentials, although I confess I had sometimes to ponder a long while to recall people who signed the letters, and who had plainly informed my visitor that we were intimate friends!

One such lady intrigued me immensely. She was the usual lofty foreigner, who could see only the filth of China; but there was something about her which I at first liked. There were various calls back and forth, shopping tours, *et cetera*, and I finally accepted an invitation to dinner at her residence. She did not understand all the undercurrents, of course, or realize what a tremendous event my presence in her house was to her servants, who were just the casual

servants a foreigner cannot evade in China, trying them out in turn until he finds a crew that is passable.

I say without egotism that I am well known in China—I have often wished I were not, because of the perpetual bother!—and that I was instantly recognized by the servants of my hostess. These went to great pains to please me, a fact which my hostess noted but did not understand. In the old days these servants would never have dared look into my face, but would always have been compelled to keep their eyes cast down, and because custom is almost unswerving in China, this lady's servants kept their eyes cast down when addressed by me or when serving me.

Later, when dinner was over, and we were gathered about the bridge tables, my hostess made an observation to me which instantly aroused my curiosity.

"Princess," she said, "I noted the action of my servants tonight, and I wish you would tell me something. The servants do not mind serving my husband and me, and such other foreigners as dine with us, because we are foreigners, and we pay them. But do you not feel that they rather resented serving you?"

I knew instantly what was coming, because I had heard something of the kind before, though it had seldom happened to me. There were many American friends of mine within hearing. I saw red flushes

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appear on the faces of many, and the ladies shifted uncomfortably. One lady, a very dear friend, started to say something, to change the subject, not wishing me to feel hurt. But she caught my warning glance and remained silent.

"I do not quite understand," I said to my hostess, as sweetly as I could. "Why should they resent serving me?"

"Well, you see, you are Chinese! So are they. They are your kind. They don't mind us, because we are foreigners; but I cannot help feeling that they resented your eating at the same table with us! Please understand that we feel highly honored in having you, but I just wondered . . ."

Strangely enough, as she spoke, my mind raced back to a gala ceremony in Paris, many years before. It was at a great reception, given in honor of a visiting gentleman from another country. My sister and I were presented to the gentleman. He took my hand, did not seem surprised or appalled when I addressed him in English, kissed my hand, and said:

"You are the first Chinese lady to whom I have ever spoken. I am highly honored!"

He was Oscar, King of Sweden.

I should have felt irritated at the rudeness of my hostess, but I knew that she had no intention whatever

## LOTOS PETALS

of being rude, or of patronizing me. She was simply curious, and almost unforgivably ignorant. The fact of the matter was that my own humblest Chinese servant would not have taken food from the hands of one of hers. I explained the matter to my hostess as carefully as I could, and even to this day I am sure she does not know how rude she was. We became good friends, despite her rudeness; but I have often wondered whether she would have been as lenient had I offended her as deeply as she would have offended me had I not understood her.

Another lady of my acquaintance went with me to dinner at the home of a high-class Chinese family. The hostess was highly educated, had traveled around the world several times, had been presented at almost every European court, was possessed plentifully of this world's goods, and had been trained from earliest childhood to be a good hostess.

After dinner my friend and I were going home in my car, when my friend made this rather enigmatic remark:

"Poor Mrs. Lu, she tries so hard!"

"She isn't poor," I said quietly, "she is quite wealthy."

I knew my friend did not refer to the wealth of Mrs. Lu, but I was eager to have her viewpoint.



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"Oh, I don't mean that," she said quickly, as I had known she would, "I mean she tries so hard to be a good hostess. It must be such a terrible job for her to entertain foreigners in their own manner!"

I must confess that this made me a trifle angry. Whenever I myself was unintentionally insulted, I remembered a certain teaching of Confucius, and did not allow rudeness to trouble me. But this lady had attacked, with the best of intentions, mind! a very dear friend of mine.

"She doesn't try hard," I informed her. "She is merely acting natural. She is the perfectly trained hostess, the sort of hostess who can give a dinner at which every nationality is represented, and carry it through without the slightest bit of discord. Could you do that? I doubt it. Mrs. Lu is a cosmopolite, probably far more at home in high society than yourself. She has everything which makes for what the world calls success . . ."

"I know," interrupted my friend tartly, "but after all, she was out of place!"

"You really mean," I said softly, "that 'after all, she is a Chinese!'"

Silence was my answer, which was as good as any, after all. The really great trouble between Chinese and foreigners who visit China, is simply this: The

foreigners take such servants as they can get, because it is the custom in China to have servants, and promptly take their servants as stock models for all Chinese.

"Chinese ladies are so shy," I have so often heard foreign ladies say, "they never have anything to say. They just simply sit and listen."

This is true, perhaps, and this is the reason: Chinese ladies are taught from earliest childhood to be good listeners. If guests wish to do all the talking, the hostess pays them the highest compliment in her power by permitting them to do all the talking. Their "shyness," in effect, is as though they had said: "You are very wise; I would enjoy the full fruits of your wisdom, and so I listen, instead of burdening you with what I know, in a vast flow of words."

After all—I believe an American first said this—you can learn but little by listening to yourself talk! So foreigners, newly arrived in China, discourse at great length with such Chinese as they are able to meet, allow their flow of oratory to roll forth without stint, filled with all their great wisdom, for which they charge nothing, and give the distinct impression that they are doing a great good work by allowing Orientals a glimpse into their awe-inspiring minds. That the real effect is far different may be readily

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surmised, though such blatant talkers never hear about it from the lips of the Chinese, who think greatly and talk but little. What good would it do to explain? The vociferous foreigners are vastly pleased with themselves, and it does not hurt the Chinese, who has patience ingrained in his heart's blood, so that everybody is satisfied—and understanding, except on one side, is as distant as ever.

I once heard an American statesman make a speech to a group of Chinese students newly returned from America and the Continent, and certain of his words have remained with me:

“You young gentlemen must realize that you stand on the threshold of great things. Our schools have taught you Western civilization, of which your country stands greatly in need. We have done much for you. We would do more. You are, essentially, Westerners, with vast powers for good in your own country. I ask you to remember but one thing, however, before you go forth to take up such duties as may be yours: That all the education in the world cannot change the color of your skin! Not even America and England can change one fact—you are still Chinamen!”

I doubt if the applause was as great as the orator had expected, especially as, at the end of his speech, he made this remark:

"You are all Chinamen, but here is one American who isn't ashamed to shake hands with you because you are Chinamen! Won't you all come forward, please, and take my hand?"

What do you suppose the Chinese did? Retire from the auditorium in high dudgeon? Not at all! They were too well bred to hurt the feelings of the orator who, after all, had meant well. They smiled at him, and every last "Chinaman" went forward and shook hands most heartily with him.

Americans, of course, are not the only offenders in this regard, and Americans, under the tutelage of such excellent diplomats as General Smedley Butler of the Marines, are learning faster than other countries that even "Chinamen" may have merits. Why, I often wonder, should people make such remarks as those quoted above? Do they feel that Chinese are ashamed of being Chinese? They are very, very wrong if that is the belief. Americans are seldom, if ever, ashamed of being Americans. Patriotism is a vast and awesome national characteristic of Americans; but there are other countries, and other peoples, other customs.

Westerners are hustlers. Their waking hours are spent hustling, giving pep talks, raising the morale of underlings, getting the business; but I often won-

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der if the game is worth the candle—if they really *live!*

There are many times when I feel myself unimpressed by the superiority of the West over the East. I have read of scientific discoveries, especially in the field of medicine, which have been hailed by savants as so far-reaching as to change the history of the world. *New* discoveries, mind you, which have been part and parcel of Chinese knowledge since the birth of Christ!

I read of new discoveries in the realm of child rearing: how foods should be prepared, calories properly apportioned—and my mind goes back to Her Majesty Tzu Hsi, who lost her beloved son Tung Chih before the dawn of the twentieth century, and recall how much she told me about preparing food for him during his last illness, during all his lifetime in fact, with her own hands. She knew nothing of calories, I must admit, yet she did know what was good for Tung Chih, and measured out his various foods with all the care which is exercised in experimental laboratories abroad. No, her son did not die of these preparations, but of smallpox! Vaccination was common then, but not taken so seriously as now.

I read of freshly discovered beauty hints, and looking back to my time with Her Majesty, from 1903 to



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1905, recall that almost every one of these beauty hint recommendations was, and had been all her life, part of her everyday knowledge. China knows these things, but she is not so good a self-advertiser as the West; which is probably not to her credit, though it should absolve her of the perpetual necessity of being patronized as inferior.

It strikes me that there are a few apt illustrations which serve to show the vast gulf between the East and the West. It first came to me when I went shopping in Los Angeles. The streets were crowded, the mob being herded across intersections like so many sheep by exceedingly rude traffic officers. I followed in the press, which was not new to me, though in this article I wish to retain as far as possible an Oriental viewpoint.

I crossed with the crowd. I noted a queerly shaped automobile drawn up to the curb before an imposing bank. Muzzles of machine guns sprouted from metal encircled loopholes. Men with shotguns across their arms stood at various vantage points about the open door of the bank. It interested me, and I stepped closer to discover what manner of motor this might be which was so precious it must needs be guarded by armed men of grim soldierly aspect, but . . .

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"Move on!" came a surly command from a burly six-footer with a gun.

And he meant me, too! He must have weighed all of two hundred and ten, slightly less than twice my own weight, and was easily a foot taller than I. He could have tucked me under one arm and carried me to Hollywood, and he carried a sawed-off shotgun into the bargain. But he ordered me to move on, because I was unduly curious, and might be tempted to run away with the armed automobile. He trusted no one.

The armed car, of course, was for use in transporting money from one bank to another. I knew this as an Occidental but as an Oriental it was strange to me, if you understand such a paradoxical statement.

I did move on, and quickly, too, with my heart pounding in my excitement. But after I had caught my breath, I paused to think the matter over, and my mind, went back to the old days, before my father died, before I even became Lady-in-Waiting to Her Majesty Tzu Hsi.

It was difficult in those days—according to Western ideas—to tell just what buildings housed banks. My father had dealings with one, and this was the manner of transactions. Father took a certain sum to the bank. This sum was registered in a book, the interest rate agreed upon, and the sort of account—whether current

or fixed—understood. The record was kept in a book at the bank, and another book given to Father, the use of which will be understood shortly.

Then, unless something unforeseen happened, Father did not again visit the bank. He had his own book in which he kept account of such transactions as he made. Say, for example, that in the morning he desired a thousand *taels* for some purpose. This is about \$620.00 at present rates. He would bring out his book, call the Number One Boy—chief male servant—and instruct him to go to the bank and get a thousand *taels*. The Number One Boy would take the book, make sure he had understood aright, and leave for the bank. He would hand the book to the banker and say that his master desired a thousand *taels*—taken as an example, as Father would have sent the boy for twenty thousand *taels* as casually—whereupon the amount would be delivered the boy in cash, and record made in the book at the bank, and in Father's own book.

It was very simple. The boy merely got the money and brought it to Father.

The point of the story lies simply in this: The Number One Boy was exceedingly well paid if he received ten American dollars a month, out of which he sometimes fed himself and a numerous progeny;

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but I never knew of a Number One Boy to decamp with funds thus intrusted to him, either Father's Number One Boy, or the Number One Boy of any of Father's official friends. As a Westerner I would wish that boy to be most carefully bonded, to make his journeys in an armored car, with armed outrider!

At the end of the year, the banker would bring the book to Father, and show him what had happened to his money.

"Here," he would say, "is what you first deposited. You deposited this on such-and-such a date, this on still another date, and so on. You got this money on this date, that on the other date. Your current account stands at this figure, your fixed at this, and your interest amounts to this figure, giving you this balance to start the new year."

If ever there were any discrepancies in the accounts, I never heard of them, and I was always a curious child, and would most assuredly have thoroughly advised myself of the matter.

Yet the very Number One Boy who had during the year, and for past years without number, handled vast sums of money for Father, invariably "squeezed" his master on the marketing, by agreeing with the merchants to stand for certain overcharges which were paid back to the Number One Boy; because this was

considered legitimate. The Number One Boy believed it his inalienable right to "squeeze," and Father, knowing it was going on, said nothing and did nothing, because he knew the custom, which there was no way of circumventing.

He could have raised that Number One Boy's salary to such a point that it would have amounted to far more than any "squeeze," yet he knew that such a course would never work, and that "squeeze" would continue anyway, because it was a right of the Number One Boy!

Then I recall, as a contrast with that armored car and its gruff guardians, certain earlier days in China, when money in cash, silver or gold, was transported from bank to bank. It went in wheelbarrows specially made for the transportation of cash, with compartments for coins of various sizes, and for *tael* "shoes" of various values. These wheelbarrows were each pushed by a single coolie who could neither read nor write, seldom knew whence the next meal was to come, dressed in rags, was grimy and dirty but perpetually smiling—and that single coolie was the only person to accompany the wheelbarrow! No guards of any kind, the coolie unarmed, and pushing his loudly protesting wheelbarrow straight up the center of the street which was invariably packed and jammed with people.



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The coolie knew full well the value of the goods he transported, and so did the people who saw the money, plainly visible, pass by. And if there were any doubt allowable in the matter, there was a yellow flag on the wheelbarrow, with the name of the bank from which sent, the bank to which consigned, and the total amount carried! Yet nobody paid the passing vehicle the slightest attention, and I never heard—in the old days—of a wheelbarrow laden with coin failing to reach its destination. Of course it might be late, for the Chinese coolie takes his time at everything, and he might desire to stop and talk with a chance acquaintance, or go inside some drinking place with him, leaving his precious wheelbarrow outside untended until he was ready to start on again.

Unbusinesslike? Of course; but I cannot help wondering how far such an open conveyance of coin would get in any Western city of my knowledge. It is notable here that as soon as Western ideas came to China, and more care was taken with gold and silver shipments, banditry immediately took firm hold, and is year by year tightening its grip.

But just the same, there is something wholesome in my memory of those creaking wheelbarrows, loaded with a nation's wealth, traveling up the street, from one to a score of them leaving the bank, each with its

yellow flag, the various barrows turning off away from the others as they scattered to the various banks to which the money had been consigned.

It is no longer done, except in the far interior, which the outlander seldom reaches except as a member of some scientific expedition, or as a purveyor of various things, including religions which do a vast deal of harping on honesty! Eventually all China will be Westernized, and wheelbarrows for the transportation of gold will give way to armored cars, while Number One Boys will be bonded as heavily as the law will allow.

Does this sound sarcastic? Not at all! China needs Western civilization, more so now than ever, since from a nation of peace she has become a nation of warriors—with foreign drillmasters!

Is China backward? She has been, yes. But the present chaos in that country, the wars and rumors of wars, will lend her more impetus than she has ever had. Foreign nations have given her a plenitude of examples upon which to pattern her armies and her war lords. Westerners fight among themselves, yet for some reason when China goes to war, the whole Western World is scandalized, and China is "primitive and barbaric." She is only, after unnumbered centuries, trying to keep up with the times, and Western-

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ers of one kind or another have inspired her to take this step.

She was not as far ahead of her time as she might have been. She had attained to peace, when Western example showed her that peace made for mediocrity and backwardness. So she went to war, only to discover that she had moved too soon.

For immediately she fired her first shots for a new Chinese democracy, the Western World burst into flames of another kind—the flair for world peace, world courts of adjudication, leagues of nations to prevent war, peace at any price whatsoever. If the West attains to this strange and lofty Nirvana, she will at last have attained that for which China has stood for centuries—and China, to keep in the swim, will have to start all over again—backward to that peace which was hers for ages.

It all sums up to this. China is greatly desirous of being understood by the West, especially the United States. The West has not cared to come half way, and China is faced with the necessity of making the entire journey herself, of literally forcing herself to the Western attention.

It isn't possible. Understanding, to be of any value, real or otherwise, must be mutual, and as I write this line my mind goes back a number of years

to a court reception which Her Majesty Tzu Hsi held for foreign ladies, in which I acted as interpreter between Her Majesty and such foreign ladies as spoke French or English.

The ladies came in. To them we members of the court must have seemed strange and barbaric. As I look backward I can easily understand this, just as then I understood that the visitors seemed quite as strange to us as we did to them. They ran wild through the palaces, making shrieking remarks about everything, appraising values of tapestries, jades and porcelains.

Her Majesty watched them with a smile which did not, from me at least, hide her resentment at what her visitors were guilty of.

One lady rushed up to a gorgeous Manchu lady who stood aloofly apart from the rest of us. This Manchu lady was beautiful, well educated, but knew no English, and was naturally amazed when this foreign lady clutched at the tie she wore, and turned to cry out to a friend:

"Oh, come and look at this one! Isn't she cute? I'll bet this outfit of hers cost a fortune!"

Her Majesty Tzu Hsi looked at me, and her eyes sent a message. I moved across to the foreign lady, and I am afraid that I gave offense, though even at this date I do not regret my act.

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"Please, Madam!" I implored. "You are giving offense! This lady is Her Majesty, the Young Empress!"

This is entirely true. The then Young Empress was China's last Empress Dowager, called Lung Yu, during the brief régime of the famous Boy Emperor, immediately following the death of Tzu Hsi, the Old Buddha.

I am quite sure the inquisitive foreign lady meant no harm; but I am sure that, had the Young Empress attended such a function at a foreign court, she would naturally have made sure beforehand how properly to conduct herself so as not to give offense, and to acquit herself of any potential charge of vulgarity.

There are two sides to every question, to every controversy, and it is only after this fact is recognized that understanding results. The West needs understanding of China, because China is vast, and her four hundred millions of people may become creators of wealth of various kinds. But even coolies resent being patronized, and are likely to withhold judgment, respect, and talents, from self-confessed superiors. No one recognizes this fact more clearly than men and women of America who have spent their lives in China.

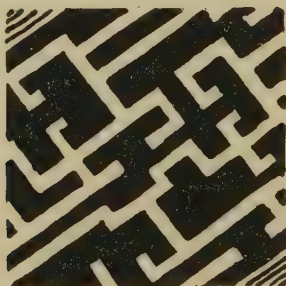
But could even these make the blind see? They



could, but they feel it more or less of a hopeless task, and do not wish to lay themselves open to the charge of having "turned native."

However, withal that I have in this article treated but one side of the question, that of the East, I feel assured that the West will come in time to understand the East, and that of all the Western nations, the United States will be the first to make that understanding mutual. She is too good a salesman to allow others to out-sell her. China knows this, and her eyes are turned toward America.

When the United States realizes more fully the need of *mutual* understanding—toward which she has been making tremendous strides—she will waken to find it already attained. It requires only a falling of the scales of racial blindness.





## THE LADY OF THE LOTOS

SUNG LI was a dreamer of dreams. He labored not, nor did he spin. His head was ever in the roseate clouds of his own fancies. He was young and good to look upon; but he was very poor. He dreamed of one day becoming a great official, after he should have passed his examinations in the ancient classics. But his dreams went even further. As a great official he would have little or nothing to do, plenty of money with which to buy the creature comforts of life—and could indulge his lust for dreaming as he willed.

A good-for-nothing, they called him, forgetting that it is the dreamer to whom the world owes the most. A wastrel, they called him, a man who wasted his master's most precious gifts—the priceless days and hours.

But Sung Li dreamed his dreams—and most of his dreams were dreams of romance.

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He was destined, though he could not know it, to prove the divine efficacy of dreams, to become the most famous of China's famous lovers.

He whiled his hours and his days away, did Sung Li, as a fisherman, a fisherman who cared little whether fish came to his line, delighting most in the mere fishing, because it gave him opportunity to sit the hours away, and dream his endless dreams, of which he told no one, admitting them reluctantly even to himself.

He would sit on the seashore, sheltered from the sun by a great sun helmet of his own contriving. A sun helmet like a great inverted basket, made of leaves and grasses, so that he looked, so motionless was he always, like a tree stump topped by stalks of corn and twigs. A tree stump with one long limb, like a slender arm, his fishing pole, with the line on the end which touched the crooning waves as they came singing in across the gently shelving beach. Few were the fish that came to his line, but Sung Li did not care. He patiently dreamed his dream—a dream of a wondrous maiden, created by the Empress of Heaven for him alone, dowered with the riches of all the world, an angel come down to earth to wed Sung Li. She should be clad in flowing robes, dotted with sparkling gems. Her arms should be like alabaster, her eyes like living

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stars, her eyebrows like the drooping petals of a night flower, ebon as the wings of a tiny blackbird; her feet should be like the golden lilies among the lotos ponds in the Imperial Gardens at Pei-Ching; her hands should be like snow that melts before the kiss and caress of the sun. She should be all perfection, this dream lady of Sung Li.

But she never came. Sung Li despaired of ever seeing the counterpart of his dream. But he still had his dream, which he dreamed by daylight and darkness, at the mud hut he called home, and on the seashore where he fished, with his dangling line touching the crests of the little waves which came crooning in.

It was the hour of sunset on a fateful afternoon. Sung Li had been motionless since first the sun had begun her snail-like journey across the sky from east to west. No fish had come to his line, not that Sung Li cared, nor had his dream-girl come to him out of Fairyland, bringing the boundless love he coveted.

Sung Li sighed and bethought himself of returning to his cheerless home before the sun went down entirely, and night-time should possess the world.

But it was a fateful afternoon.

For just as Sung Li thought of going home, some creature of the deep broke the placid surface of the

sea, far out—and Sung Li was held motionless with surprise, watching.

It was a giant turtle which came up. Only its head and its scaly neck were visible. The turtle was more agile than were most turtles Sung Li had ever seen. It did not break water entirely, nor did it swim aimlessly to and fro. It merely came up, craning its scaly neck, from the size of which Sung Li knew the creature for a very monster of the deep, and looked all around the fading horizon. Sung Li did not move. He might have been the tree stump he seemed, so motionless was he.

The turtle went down again, and circles, little wavelets, radiated out from the spot where he had gone down, forming wheels within wheels.

Sung Li sighed again. Mystery here, whose meaning he might have grasped, save that, with the going down of the turtle, the heart of the mystery seemed somehow to have eluded him. He sighed again, be-  
thinking himself of home once more.

But ere he could move, the surface of the sea broke into circling wheels again. A great green stalk, like a stalk of corn, save that its proportions were huge, appeared from the deep, very near where the huge turtle had gone down. Higher and higher out of the water came the great green pillar, until it stood above the



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water to the height, almost, of Sung Li himself. Then the stalk began to spread, opening like a magic flower, and Sung Li saw that it was a lotos—and amazement almost made him cry out. Lotos was for the ponds of Emperors and Empresses, for Princesses and ladies of high degree. It never flourished in the salty waters of the sea, but only in ponds, where it could be tended by the loving hands of faithful servants.

But there it was, opening like a magic flower—a flower of the sunset, whose golden hues tinted its green and made it brighter, struck laughing white flames from the water which fell from it, returning to the sea whence they came, falling back in globules that sparkled like precious jewels.

At last the lotos was completely open, its broad leaves resting, undulating slightly, upon the surface of the sea whose wavelets seemed to croon more meaningfully as they swept softly across the beach on whose edge sat Sung Li the dreamer.

And upon the green carpet thus spread for her tiny feet, stood the counterpart of Sung Li's never-ending dream, full sprung from the heart of the lotos. Sung Li gasped in wonder, in adoration, worshipping and reverent, as his eyes devoured all the beauty of this little lady who had come up from the depths for him to

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see. From the crown of her shapely head to the feet which rested like the fragile stems of fragile lilies upon the leaf of the lotos, Sung Li studied this counterpart of his dreams—and found her that counterpart indeed.

He did not move, because some voice deep within him warned him that this lady of his dreams was very shy, and might go back to the depths from which she had risen if he made a sound.

Then the girl of Sung Li's dream began to dance! It was like no dancing he had ever seen. There was the grace of angels in her every movement. Her grace made Sung Li think of an old story of ancient China which told of how a great and good Emperor slept, and dreamed of dancing fairies in the moon; he thought of moonlight on the Pei-Ho; of sunset on the blue lagoons of Northern China; of rainbows in a sky all moist and sweet with mist and spray—

Then Sung Li spoke—and speaking, broke the spell.

"Whence are you?" he asked breathlessly. "What is your name? Are you woman of flesh and blood?"

Instantly, as though a signal had been sounded by some invisible, inaudible prompter, the leaves of the lotos began to close. Before they closed entirely Sung Li was conscious of a startled face in the center of the lotos, a face like a white flower, whose eyes, bright as



Then the stalk began to spread, opening like a  
magic flower



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laughing stars, peered, frightened, into Sung Li's own. And then the lotos, a mere green pillar once again, slipped into the sea and was lost—and Sung Li, sad and disappointed, drew in his line and wended his way homeward. Into his ears a voice whispered, a voice that was without sound, yet whose words struck meaning in his heart—

“I shall return tomorrow evening,” said the voice, “just as the sun goes down. Come once more to the beach, and I shall dance for you.”

Sung Li rolled and tossed that night on his rough pallet. He had found the figure of his dreams, yet knew not if she lived and breathed, a woman of earth, or were a fairy out of the Land of Fancy.

The night was endless, and the day which followed endless, too. Sung Li could scarce contain himself in patience, waiting for the sunset. He hid himself in the sand as the sun approached the western horizon, hid himself and uttered not a sound, made motion only as he breathed, until the head of the huge turtle had come up a second time, peered all around, and returned again to the depths of ocean.

Then the green pillar, the spreading leaves, and the girl of his dreams a-dancing upon the lotos carpet. She danced for Sung Li, and to Sung Li, and her eyes that were like laughing stars of great brightness,



searched along the gentle beach for the form of Sung Li, and Sung Li moved then, gently, lest his motion frighten her, and she return to the sea as she had on another sunset, leaving naught but the figment of a dream behind her.

"I love you," he softly called.

"See," she replied, "I dance for you. If you love me, Sung Li, come to me here, that I may see you, that you are fair to look upon."

"I cannot swim," replied Sung Li, "and the waters of ocean lie deep between us."

The girl from the depths paused in her dancing and her eyes were full of trouble, and of thought.

"You must find a way to reach me," she said at length. "See," pointing with a snow-white arm like alabaster, an arm so pure of line that Sung Li gasped in open admiration, "yonder is my castle. May the scales fall from your mortal eyes, that you may see!"

The scales fell, and afar across the bosom of the waters which stretched unbroken to the horizon, Sung Li saw the castle, like a castle of another dream, white and shining in the slanting rays of the dying sun, a castle of towers and battlements, of windows with gleaming gems for windowpanes, and doors of wood so white it matched the almost-matchless perfection of the arms of Sung Li's girl of dreams.

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"That is my home," she said. "I live in yonder palace. I am daughter to the King of Water Dragons. My father is absent on business for the throne. I live alone, for a little while with none about me but my faithful servants, whom I trust. Find a way to reach me there, Sung Li, to tell me of your love. But beware the turtle, who is my guardian!"

She danced for him yet a little while, giving him opportunity to further drink of her flawless beauty. Then the lotos closed, returned to the depths of Mother Ocean, and wheels within wheels spread and whirled about the spot where Sung Li's maiden of all-perfection had gone down.

But afar off, toward the horizon, the castle of the Dragon King persisted—with *li* after *li* of blue water in between. Sung Li knew not what to do. He prayed to the God of Heaven, and to the God of Earth, and it was the God of Earth who, in His own way, made answer to his prayer. And this was the prayer he offered up:

"Give me the wings of an angel, if only for a little while, that I may journey for a moment to the lady of the lotos in yonder castle."

Over and over he repeated his prayer. But no answer came. Sighing, knowing himself so near the creature of his dreams, so near yet with all the earth,

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all the heavens, and the depths of Mother Ocean in between, Sung Li turned about to wend his disappointed way homeward once more.

Right beside him, as though risen whole from the sands of the shore, stood a very old man, bearing a gnarled staff in his hand. The man smiled gently, a little sadly, into the eyes of Sung Li. Long white locks hung like snow about his shoulders. He was very venerable, very old—and he carried a gnarled staff in his hand.

"I know you," said the old man. "You are Sung Li, a dreamer of dreams! You pray for an angel's wings, upon which to span the gulf which separates you from the castle which shelters the girl of your fancy. Hear my prophecy, O Sung Li! It is written in the stars of heaven that you and the girl of the lotos shall one day be man and wife, that you shall enjoy happiness, sublime, all-encompassing happiness, for a little while, and then—but I must not tell it all, lest knowledge rob you of that happiness. I do not give you wings, O Sung Li, but I lay this staff upon the waters, and lo! it becomes a bridge whereby you may cross dry-shod to the castle of the lotos-lady!"

The old man spread his staff upon the waters, and the staff became a bridge. Out upon the bridge, his

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head held high with firm resolve, fearless in the face of the old man's doubtful prophecy, stepped Sung Li.

"I would give you my life for a brief moment of the uttermost in happiness," whispered Sung Li, marching on with his head held high.

He turned and looked back at the shore. But the old man had vanished. Right and left along the endless beach Sung Li sought for the bowed, venerable form, but did not find it. Stout of heart he turned and strode on, and ere the sun sank at last behind the western horizon, Sung Li entered the castle of the Dragon King, the great white doors closed behind him, shutting off from view of mortals his first gentle meeting with the maiden of his dreams.

Sung Li sat at the feet of the lotos-lady, in a secluded room in the palace of the Dragon King. In words that sang with love's music he told her of his dreams, and how her coming had made them real. She listened graciously, bending over to look into the black eyes of Sung Li. He spoke truth, she knew, truth from the depths of his heart. So, with little notes of ecstasy, wordless, in her throat, she bent above Sung Li, and touched his cheeks with her snow-white finger.

"I, too, have had my dreams, Sung Li," she said. "For I have been a prisoner in the palace here, all my

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days, guarded by my father while he is here, watched over zealously in his absence by the turtle-guardian whom you have seen. Oh, he watches me, this turtle! It was almost a year after my first asking that he gave me grudging permission to go a-dancing where you saw me, and then only after sunset, when the beach should be empty of mortals. And there—I discovered you, Sung Li, who love me."

She bent even lower to whisper the words which she yet must say.

"And whom I love, with all my heart, and with all my soul!"

Sung Li seized her fragile hands and held them, pressed them lightly, reverently, as though he feared the coarseness of his own might leave some staining scar upon them. He leaned against her knees, and words departed from him, because the knowledge of the finding of his dream was crowding in upon him, filling all his being, so that he could find no words to trace the thoughts that warmed his heart.

The uttermost the world could offer of happiness!

Then, of a sudden, a rumble of thunder shook the castle of the King of Dragons. On its foundations it shook and trembled.

"My father is returning," breathed the lotos-lady. "He must not find you here! But come again when



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he has left! I shall tell you when, for I shall come each evening to dance for you. Beware the turtle, though, Sung Li."

Sung Li, guided by a faithful servant of the lotos-lady, quitted the castle. He reached the bridge and strode out upon it. He turned, his heart filled with despair, to look back. The bridge was rolling up behind him, and blue water stretched away toward the horizon. The palace of the Dragon King had disappeared, or scales were on his eyes again. But he could hear the rumbling of distant thunder, and the bridge trembled beneath his feet. He hurried on, and as he moved faster, faster the bridge rolled up behind him.

He turned his head aside as a great head and neck broke the surface of the water right beside him. It was the huge sea-turtle, guardian to the Lady of the Lotos. The eyes of the turtle were filled with menace as he stared coldly at Sung Li, looked all along the bridge, noted how it rolled up behind the dreamer—then the head went under, and wheels within wheels whirled about the spot where it had disappeared.

Sung Li reached the beach and looked back, rubbing his eyes, believing, almost, that it had been just a dream. There was sorrow in his heart. He could come on the morrow, though, and the Lady of the Lotos would dance for him.

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Inside the palace of the Dragon King the Lady of the Lotos stood straight and proud before her father. Groveling at the feet of the King of Dragons was the great sea-turtle.

"But he was here, inside the palace!" said the guardian.

The Lady of the Lotos replied, before her father, his face flushed with terrible anger, could find words.

"Yes, he was here, alone with me. I love him! He loves me! I wish to be with him always."

"But he is a lowly mortal!" thundered the Dragon King. "You are an unnatural child, an ungrateful child, to give your love to a man of mortal clay!"

The Lady of the Lotos made no reply. She had already spoken all there was for her to say. She waited.

"Take her," said the Dragon King at last, "and set her herding sheep on the mountains! Henceforth she is no child of mine! I disown her! I cast her forth! If she starve so be it! Throw her across the water with all your power. She shall become as mortals are, and never may return to the palace of the Dragon King!"

The turtle ambled forward, seized the Lady of the Lotos, and hurled her from the palace. She landed in a far province, many, many *li* from the palace where

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Sung Li had first found her, and she was taken in by kindly shepherds, who rejoiced in their good fortune because the gods had sent them a shepherdess so fair, and set her to tending their flocks, while they whiled away their time with wine and song.

This is why, though Sung Li returned every day to the beach where he had found her, the Lady of the Lotos came never again to dance for him.

Sad and disappointed, wishing he might die, yet living on in hope, Sung Li went to Pei-Ching to take his examinations, which he passed with highest honors. They offered him wealth and position, but he refused them all, pining along for the Lady of the Lotos, who had come no more.

The God of Earth took pity on the lovers. He found the Lady of the Lotos with her flocks. He bore the tale to Sung Li, who recognized the God of Earth as the old man who had given him the bridge to attain the reality of his never-ending dream—and harkened to his story. It filled him with fury.

"I shall find the Dragon King and slay him!" he said.

Nor could the God of Earth dissuade him from his purpose. Sung Li traveled two whole moons, reaching at last the beach where, so often in the past, he had sat

beneath his sun helmet, thinking, his head in the roseate clouds of his own fancy.

He looked for the castle of the King of Dragons. It was not there. No wavelets disturbed the bosom of the sea, which now was smooth as glass. He blinked his eyes, striving to make the scales fall from them. And then, suddenly, the bridge was there, and Sung Li was upon it, walking!

He reached the castle, which he entered. He fought for a day and a night against the King of Dragons. But the King of Dragons, voicing his fury in words that were like thunder, finally prevailed against his strength.

"Throw him into the sea!" commanded the King of Dragons of the turtle.

They threw Sung Li into the sea, where he became a fish, a sorrowful fish who swam everywhere, in and out of shadowed caverns, seeking always the face and form of his beloved. Once he came up near the sea-shore, looking all around—and there, gazing at the castle, stood the Lady of the Lotos, and she was clothed in rags. She held her hands toward the castle, beseechingly, but no sound, no sign, came to show her that her father, or the turtle-guardian, heard her plea.

For a long time Sung Li, who could not speak, watched the Lady of the Lotos. When the sun

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reached the western horizon, filling the western sky with crimson, the Lady of the Lotos, who would dance no more, slew herself in the sands, using a slender dagger she had carried with her from the castle to protect her against the world. She fell, gently, and lay still. The wind began to rise, softly whispering, while Sung Li, knowing that some great happiness was toward, swam just below the surface and waited. Higher crept the waves, higher and higher, plucking at the ragged clothing of the dead lotos-lady—higher until her lacy arms enwrapped her, and bore her, at long last, down to the sea whence she had first come to hear the whispered love words of Sung Li.

So the sea claimed her. Her mortal casement fell from her, and Sung Li was there, his heart wildly beating, to wait for the coming of the miracle. Out of the midst of the rags which had covered the exquisite body of the Lady of the Lotos, swam a slender, fragile, wondrously iridescent fish, a fish whose eyes were like laughing stars. Straight to Sung Li swam the fish, until her mouth was against his mouth. Then, turning, side by side, back into the depths of all-encompassing Mother Ocean, swam the reunited lovers.

Today they say in China that a certain kind of fish, which seems to be two fish forever entwined together,



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is the offspring of Sung Li and his lady of dreams—  
and that in their offspring, plentiful now as the sands  
along the shore, they have immortalized the love  
which was theirs.





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"HER MAJESTY has granted audience to the famous American admiral," whispered one eunuch to another, until the whisper became the loud-speaker it usually was in the Imperial Palace of Her Majesty, Tzu Hsi, the Empress Dowager of China, when anything of importance occurred. There were some three thousand eunuchs in the Imperial Palace, and the majority of them were extremely busy doing nothing most of the time; so it does not take any very great stretch of the imagination to realize what a hubbub they could make if anything of an unusual character stirred them up. Although there had been many occasions such as this since the return of the court to Peking in 1902, after the Boxer Uprising, it did not lessen the excitement whenever Her Majesty received members of the Diplomatic Corps or distinguished people from Western nations.

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Prior to 1900 an audience granted to the wives of foreign representatives was an unheard-of thing. Her Majesty was most conservative and would not allow anyone to enter the Forbidden City except the families of the Imperial clan and high Manchu officials. Even these people were not allowed to enter without her special permission. She would issue a decree, ordering such and such persons to present themselves at the palace on a certain day; the time of entrance and departure clearly indicated. This rule was strictly obeyed by all of those fortunate enough to be admitted to court.

Very few of China's 400,000,000 people ever saw Her Majesty. And very few, save her ladies-in-waiting and the eunuchs who served her, ever got close enough to her to know her well, if at all.

I have been asked by many, many foreign people over the years, why it was that the Empress Dowager was so bitter against all foreigners. The origin of her bitterness was the destruction of the beautiful Yuen Ming Yuen Palace in 1860. This Yuen Ming Yuen Palace was located near the site of the present Summer Palace at Peking, and its destruction she considered a wanton piece of vandalism. It was to the Yuen Ming Yuen Palace that the Empress Dowager went to become the bride of the Emperor, Hsien

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Feng, and where she spent many happy days before being driven from this magnificent place.

It was in this palace that she first grasped the reins of power. She thought it was such a barbarous act on the part of the Western people, deliberately to destroy this palace by setting fire to it, that hatred seethed in her breast to the end of her days. During my service in the Forbidden City as her First Lady-in-Waiting, she often said to me:

"If the palace had been destroyed by the big guns during a battle, I would not feel so bitter, as the guns have no eyes and could not see what they destroyed. But, as the British said later, it was destroyed as a warning to China that the British Government would not be trifled with, and as a warning of future reprisals, should occasion arise. Would you call that a civilized act? The foreign powers knew that China was in no position to fight. Instead of talking in a friendly manner across the table, they resorted to fire-arms to force China to do their bidding."

Another reason for her bitterness was that when Sun Yat-sen fled from China and the wrath of the Empress Dowager for plotting against the throne and her life, he was protected by foreign governments and could not be apprehended. The Empress Dowager had set a big price on his head, and more than one

attempt was made to capture him and return him to China for punishment, but each time these attempts were frustrated. She instructed her ministers in foreign countries to arrest him and return him to China, but they could do nothing, as there were no extradition treaties between China and other countries.

At the time these events occurred, the Empress Dowager was not at all versed in the matter of treaties, and made the remark to me:

"The foreign powers pretend to be very friendly to China; at the same time they protect criminals who have fled from China to escape punishment. Suppose some European country or America had a criminal escape to China and I protected this criminal, I would consider it an unfriendly act on my part."

In 1898 the young Emperor, Kwang Hsu—her nephew—reached his majority, and the Empress Dowager placed the reins of power in his hands and retired to the Summer Palace, located some distance outside of the walls of Peking. Her Majesty had retired but a short time when the information was brought to her that one of the Emperor's trusted advisers, Kang Yu-wei, was influencing him to institute all sorts of reforms, and was plotting against her life. It was also reported to her that Kang was urging the Emperor to embrace the Christian religion.



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These things made her furious, and were the cause of the famous coup d'état of 1898, now well known to history. Her Majesty returned to the Forbidden City and again resumed her rule, and Kang fled to Europe and America with a price set upon his head.

Again Her Majesty instructed her ministers abroad to capture this political refugee and return him to China, and again her orders could not be carried out, as the foreign powers refused to assist.

The next reason for her bitterness was on account of an incident that happened in the interior of China. A foreign missionary was killed, and the consul of the power concerned demanded that the people responsible for the death of this missionary should be punished, and four Chinese were tried and beheaded by order of the viceroy. The Empress Dowager sent word to this viceroy to do something drastic to appease the foreign government concerned, for fear of more reprisals.

Years after, Her Majesty was telling me about this, and said:

"I cannot understand why the foreign people come to China to teach the Chinese their religion. Those Chinese who have been converted to the Christian religion do not worship their ancestors' graves, nor observe the old laws and customs of China. They are constantly fighting against their own people, and are

a continual source of trouble. It is such incidents as this that led up to the Boxer Uprising of 1900."

Up to the time of the Boxer Uprising, she had no fear of the Westerners, but after her return from exile in 1902, she realized that she was not strong enough to cope with their immense strength, and formulated a policy of conciliation and friendliness, although her bitterness and hatred of all things foreign were, if anything, more intense. The events of 1900 left a lasting impression on the mind of the Empress Dowager, and ever thereafter she lived in fear of the Westerner and his power.

Maybe the reason for this fear had something to do with what she told me one day when she was in a reminiscent mood. Speaking of the trouble and hardship she went through in 1900, she said:

"The foreign powers are always interfering with my affairs of state, also my private household affairs. Do you know that the real reason why I fled so far into the interior was to escape being captured? It was the intention of the foreign powers to kidnap the Emperor, Kwang Hsu, and place him on the throne, and to capture me, take me to their countries, put me in a cage and exhibit me, so that everybody could see the terrible person who was the cause of so many people being killed in China. But they were not able to find

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either the Emperor or myself, and my ministers finally persuaded these bloodthirsty foreign devils to accept a big indemnity instead. I have always regretted that I gave the order to fire on the foreign legations, but I was desperate and wanted to drive all the foreigners out of China, so that the people of China could carry on the laws and customs of our ancestors free from outside interference. Of course, I now realize that I made a big mistake. These foreign devils are really powerful and I am afraid of them.

"Ancestor worship and the twenty-four rules of filial piety, strictly observed for over 4,000 years, were the foundation of life in the Chinese Empire, and what made China a great nation. Why should we change our religion now? It has always been a great puzzle to me why the Western people should want to come to my country and teach my people these new ideas. If they don't like our ways, why don't they return to their own countries and stay there? If teaching their religion to my people is considered a friendly act, I should return the compliment by sending some of my Buddhist priests to their countries to teach the Buddhist religion. I believe I shall make this proposal to the diplomatic body when the opportunity presents itself. I am sure such a demand would be considered

unreasonable, in the same way that I consider what is being done in China is unreasonable."

During my sojourn at the court, the Empress Dowager granted audience to many Western people, accompanied in all cases by a diplomatic representative. All formal audiences were held in the audience halls, either in the Forbidden City or the Summer Palace. These audience halls were very massive and imposing structures, covering a large area of ground. The exteriors were painted in rich and vivid colors, and made a rare picture as one approached the great doors leading into the throne room. The interior was richly decorated with paintings and priceless porcelains and bronzes, placed on blackwood stands at each side of the throne.

The throne itself was on a raised dais, facing the entrance to the hall. At the back of the throne was a five-leaf screen made of solid blackwood, richly carved and inlaid with precious stones and jade. At each side of the throne and a little toward the back were two handsome peacock fans, symbols of good luck, and the whole platform was beautifully decorated. The throne was approached by ascending six steps, covered with gorgeously woven yellow brocade. At the Empress Dowager's left was a smaller throne, which was occupied by the Emperor, Kwang Hsu.

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The procedure followed when receiving Western people in audience was that the Empress Dowager and the Emperor seated themselves on their thrones before the visitors entered the audience hall. On arrival at the palace gates, the master of ceremonies would announce the fact to the throne. As soon as this was done, all the court ladies, court attendants and officials took their proper stations around the dais, and it was my duty to ascend the six steps and take my place at the right side of the Empress Dowager, to be in readiness to do her bidding. While we were waiting for the visitors to enter, we could hear their shoes making a noise on the flagstones in the courtyard as they approached, and some of them even squeaked. This seemed very funny to the Empress Dowager, as Chinese shoes have cloth soles and are noiseless.

One day she said:

"What are those people's shoes made of, that they make so much noise? And what is that funny, squeaking sound? If their shoes always make such a commotion, they could never be thieves, as the sound would give notice of their approach."

On one occasion when audience was being held for foreign people, and all the guests were assembled in the throne room, Her Majesty was surprised to see



that several of her guests had "little black boxes" in their hands. She asked me:

"Are those little black boxes cameras?" I replied that they were, and she was very angry at the rudeness of the guests. According to the ancient Chinese etiquette, no matter how rude a guest might be, the host or hostess could not criticize, as it would be considered a lack of hospitality. So, instead of forbidding these guests to use their cameras, she continually moved her body and head so they could not take her picture. After the audience was over, she asked me if I thought they had succeeded in photographing her. When I assured her that the hall was too dark and that it was impossible to take a good picture in such a poor light, she felt much relieved.

At the first audience I ever attended, there was quite a bit of confusion caused by the difference in the etiquette of the court and that of foreign countries. According to Chinese etiquette, the person or persons receiving guests should first bid them welcome, but in this particular instance one of the foreign ministers started to inquire after the health of Her Majesty and the Emperor before I had a chance to say anything, whereat the Empress Dowager was much surprised, and instructed me to proceed regardless of what was being said by the minister, which I did. This

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struck me as being very funny, and I could not keep from laughing. Being very young at that time, I was forgiven my levity, although it somewhat injured the dignity of the minister in question. The Empress Dowager, among her many moods and peculiarities, had a great sense of humor, and saw the funny side of this incident, which saved the day for us all.

After the speeches of welcome and greeting were over, the visitors were conducted to the banquet hall, where a sumptuous repast was served.

After the visitors had left, the Empress Dowager always asked many questions. She wanted to know why the Westerners dressed in such queer fashion. Why the men were dressed all in black and wore such funny collars. They should feel very uncomfortable. And how could they sit down, wearing such tight trousers? And why did they have such huge stomachs? She said:

"I hate to shake hands with them, as their hands are covered with hair just like a beast. They are certainly different from us."

On one occasion when members of the legations were being received, the Empress Dowager observed the Austrian Minister offering his arm to assist a lady down the steps leading from the audience hall, and asked me:

"Why does that man offer his arm to the lady? Is she his wife?" When I replied that it was foreign etiquette to do so, and that the lady was not the minister's wife, she replied:

"The morals of these foreign people must be very bad for them to allow such familiarity; besides, the eunuchs are here to perform such services. I have been told that in Western homes there is a hat stand in the hallway of each home. If the husband comes home and finds a man's hat or umbrella or cane in the hallway, it is to signify that his wife has a caller and that she is not to be disturbed. Truly the Chinese people must be very moral as compared with these people from the West."

In 1903, a photograph of the Czar and Czarina of Russia, together with a photograph of a Russian state banquet, was presented to the Empress Dowager by the Russian Minister at Peking. When the Empress Dowager saw the photograph of the banquet, she was much surprised to see that the men and ladies were seated alternately at the table. She was also very much surprised at the apparel worn by the ladies. After looking at this photograph for some time, she turned to me and said:

"Why are the men and women seated at the same table, and why are they seated beside each other? We

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have no such custom in China. I should think the women would be ashamed of themselves; they do not seem to have any clothes on. I agree with Confucius, that after a boy or girl has reached the age of seven, they should not be allowed to sit at the same table together for fear their morals may be corrupted. The world may call us a barbarian nation, but our civilization permits of no such familiarity between men and women. If I had not stopped the crazy reforms the Emperor tried to put into force in 1898, there is no telling but what our women might be wearing such indecent clothes as are shown in this photograph from Russia."

When the word came to the court that the famous American admiral, Robley Evans, had arrived in Peking, it caused great excitement. The Chief Eunuch, Li Lien Ying, told the Empress Dowager that he had heard that the American admiral and many soldiers were riding around the streets of Peking, and wondered what they were doing. The Empress Dowager replied:

"Oh, that is nothing. The American Minister has requested an audience for the Admiral and his staff, and Prince Ching, the Grand Councilor, has just brought the word."

Her Majesty was always very suspicious when re-

quests for audience were made by the foreign diplomats, as she had the idea that the real reason for such requests was to pry into her private affairs and to try to find out how the Emperor, Kwang Hsu, was being treated by her. It was a known fact among Western people that she had held the Emperor a virtual prisoner since the coup d'état of 1898. She also thought that the foreign nations were only waiting a chance or an excuse to take the Emperor away from her and place him on the throne, thus destroying her power forever. This suspicion never left her mind, and she carried it to her grave. She was even suspicious of the American Minister's request for an audience for Admiral Evans, until she ascertained that he had come on a friendly visit to the capital, and had brought friendly greetings from his Government.

When the Empress Dowager discussed this audience with me, she said:

"You know that I have replied to the American Minister that I will be glad to receive Admiral Evans in audience. I intend to entertain his party lavishly, and have decided to have a two days' reception. The Admiral and his staff will be received on the first day, and on the second day I shall give a garden party for the ladies. The Americans seem to be different from other Western people. They are more friendly. It



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was reported to me that the American soldiers were the best disciplined of any during the terrible siege of Peking in 1900, and I know America is not an aggressive nation, nor has it any intention of seizing our land as some of the other nations have done. It was America that saved China from being partitioned among the foreign nations, and so far as it is possible for me to feel kindly toward any Western nation, I feel kindly and friendly toward America. This audience and garden party that I shall give for the Admiral and his people, I want to arrange very carefully, and have it a bright, gala affair, so that they will see how friendly we really are. After the formalities are over, I shall invite the ladies to visit the various buildings, including my bedroom. My reason for inviting them particularly to visit my bedroom is that I have been told that Western people think we sleep on the floor and have very uncomfortable furniture. Of course, I shall change the bedroom completely, and remove my priceless treasures, as I do not wish to have them gazed upon by profane eyes."

She had her little peculiarities, the same as any other human. For instance, she would not want it to be known that her dressing table, designed by herself, was shaped like a half-moon, so she could rest her elbows on its ends while her specially trained eunuch

dressed her hair. This table had three mirrors, which, when folded up, looked like an oblong box.

Below these mirrors was a little drawer in which she secretly kept her cosmetics, for even an empress in the far-off Chinese Empire liked to rouge her lips and powder her nose, and she took much pride in doing it artistically.

As a widow who used cosmetics would be looked upon as immoral in China, the secret of this little drawer in her specially designed dressing table was carefully guarded from prying eyes.

Not only did Her Majesty use cosmetics and powder but hair dye as well. One day I saw her putting some black liquid on her hair. She remarked to me:

"It is a pity that youth lasts but a few years. Mine has flown, and I am using this terrible hair dye to cover up my gray hair." This dye gave her hair an unnatural color and somewhat spoiled her appearance, so I recommended a Parisian hair dye that I knew of. Her Majesty tried this dye, and the result was wonderful. She was so pleased about it that she gave me leave of absence from the court to visit my parents, a pleasure that I had been looking forward to for a long time.

On the occasion of Mrs. Evans' visit to Her Maj-

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esty's bedchamber, this dressing table was removed to another part of the palace, for fear that, as she remarked, "these strangers might notice its peculiar shape and want to know what was inside of it."

I might explain that such minute curiosity on the part of guests was considered perfectly proper in China, so she quite naturally thought Westerners might have the same curiosity.

The curtains on the windows of her bedchamber were of a delicate rose-colored silk. These she had removed, and they were replaced by ones of a conventional blue, which she hated.

Her bed was very fascinating and odd, viewed from the Western standpoint. It was about ten feet long, built against one wall of the room, and was seven feet wide and about three feet high. Over the bed was a canopy of richly carved sandalwood, supported by posts of the same wood. Three heavily padded silk quilts formed the mattress. Her bed sheets were of heavy, rose-colored silk, to match the curtains, over which were placed several silk comforters stuffed with fine-spun silk. As you will see, this bed was enormous, and when Her Majesty retired for the night, she looked like a tiny speck in a billowy sea.

Along the wall side of her bed were many cabinets in which she placed the jewels she had been wearing

for the day. On top of the center cabinet was placed a small green jade Goddess of Mercy, which watched over her when she slept. The walls were covered with heavy yellow satin, embroidered with a dragon and a phoenix, symbols of royalty of the Chinese Empire, and the yellow satin spread upon her bed matched the walls.

She had many pillows on her bed, and one of them was of a very peculiar pattern, which she used almost exclusively in her later years. This pillow was about twelve inches long, in the middle of which was a hole about three inches square. The pillow was stuffed with dried rose, jasmine and honeysuckle petals. It stood about two inches high and was very stiff. The reason for this hole was that when she lay on it she could place her ear in the hole and the slightest sound would awaken her. I was told, when at court, that she had this little pillow made after her return from exile in 1900, as, from that time on, she lived in fear of being assassinated.

Being the only court lady who understood foreign customs and manners, the duty of preparing for these two audiences devolved upon me. She gave me orders to prepare carefully the banquets that were to be given, and to select such food as I thought would be most pleasing to the Western palate. She also said:

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"Instruct the eunuchs that two of them shall attend each lady to assist them up and down the steps, and to lift the long trains on their dresses so that they will not get dirty."

According to Chinese etiquette, a host and visitor always exchanged presents, and I was ordered to prepare presents to be given to the expected guests. The Empress Dowager knew that it was not the Western custom to do this, but it made no difference to her, and preparations went on in the usual way.

The night before this important event was to take place, an order was given to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to escort the Admiral from the city to the Summer Palace, a distance of some ten miles. The party was met at the gate of the American Legation, and each guest was provided with a richly ornamented sedan chair, carried by four chair bearers. A special sedan chair, gorgeously decorated in green trappings and carried by eight men, to denote his high rank, was provided for Admiral Evans. Escorting these sedan chairs were outriders and soldiers, and the cavalcade was a sight to behold as it wended its way through the streets of Peking.

When final preparations for the audience had been discussed, Her Majesty said to me:

"You need not be present at the audience tomorrow



to assist me in talking to my guests, as there will be only men present. I do not think it is right or proper for you to be subjected to the gaze of men—especially Western men.”

I knew I could not afford to show how disappointed I was at not being permitted to meet the Admiral and his officers; but at the same time I wanted to smile. If the dear old lady had had the slightest inkling of the good time I had had when I was in Paris, dancing and going out with the young Frenchmen, I am sure she would have been both horrified and very angry. So, in order to relieve the situation, I suggested that Dr. Wu Ting Fang, who had just returned from his tour of duty as minister in Washington, take my place, and assured Her Majesty that Minister Wu spoke excellent English. Her Majesty was pleased with this suggestion and ordered Minister Wu to present himself. Then she thought a moment, and said:

“You and the other court ladies may be present, but you must stay behind the screen at the back of my throne, so you will not be seen.”

The morning of the audience, Her Majesty hurried through the routine audience with her grand councilors and disposed of affairs of state rapidly, in order to prepare her person carefully to receive her Western guests. This day she was most particular about her

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appearance—although she was always neatness itself—as she wished to appear at her best.

It took her a long time to select her gown and the jewels to match, but this was finally done, and she seemed both happy and satisfied. She said to me that she intended to wear her famous pearls, and when I suggested that she wear a diamond crown—the most magnificent piece of jewelry I have ever seen—that had been presented to her by Li Hung Chang, her favorite statesman, she replied:

“I wouldn’t wear an ornament made of glass, and it certainly would not be a compliment to our distinguished guest for me to do so.”

At the time this event took place, nothing was known about diamonds in China, and when this priceless gift was presented to the Empress Dowager, she thought the crown was really made of glass. As a matter of fact, it was worth about one million *taels*—\$700,000 in American money.

When Her Majesty was finally ready for the audience, she was dressed in a beautiful green gown, embroidered with pearls and precious stones. She really looked lovely, and very serene and dignified.

When all was ready, Her Majesty proceeded to the audience hall, followed by all her court ladies. As soon as she arrived, she ascended the dais and seated

herself upon the throne. We arranged her gown in proper order and handed her the written speech of welcome which she was to deliver to her guests.

The guests finally arrived, and the fact was announced to Her Majesty by the master of ceremonies. As the party approached the audience hall, Her Majesty could see them coming, and remarked:

"What a lot of people. Are they the Admiral's servants?" I told her the people following the Admiral and the American Minister were officers of the United States Navy, not servants. When a Chinese admiral travels, he takes all his servants with him, even his cook, so one can understand that this was a very natural question for Her Majesty to ask. Nothing further was said at this time, as the Admiral was ascending the steps, and she motioned me to get behind the screen, which I did.

Although we court ladies were compelled to hide behind the screen, we did not miss what was going on entirely, as the carved work of the panels was open and we could peep through. This screen was at the back of the throne, near the wall, with just room enough for us all to get behind, and there was much pushing and giggling, as there was not room enough for all the court ladies to peep through at the same time.

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I had a good position for peeping, and saw Admiral Evans and the American Minister, Mr. Conger, enter, followed by Mr. E. T. Williams, Secretary of the Legation. The staff officers filed slowly in behind their chief and ranged themselves in a straight line at each side, facing the throne.

The officers were a handsome lot and gave us court ladies a great thrill. After Her Majesty had received the formal bow of Admiral Evans, she made her speech of welcome, which was translated by Dr. Wu Ting Fang, who stood at the steps of the dais. The Admiral then made his speech, saying that he brought friendly greeting from the President of the United States, and so on, which Doctor Wu translated, kneeling on the floor and facing Her Majesty.

Poor Dr. Wu Ting Fang had a hard time that day, as, every time Her Majesty spoke to him, he had to kneel on the floor to receive her word; likewise he had to kneel when translating to her what the Admiral had said. Here I might explain that it was the rigid custom of the court that anybody, no matter who it was or how high his official rank might be, had to kneel on the floor before Her Majesty when addressing her or receiving her orders, and this occasion was no exception.

After the formal speeches had been disposed of, the

party ascended the dais and shook hands with Her Majesty, and she gave each a warm, welcoming smile.

When the handshaking was over, the party was conducted to the banquet hall, and Prince Ching acted as host for the occasion.

He later took them through the palace grounds, after which they departed.

After the audience was over, we court ladies came from behind the screen, and I went at once to Her Majesty's side. She said to me:

"I am much pleased with my visitors. The Admiral has a nice, kind face and was extremely polite. I did not mind shaking hands with him and his nice-looking officers a bit."

She wanted to know what those boards on the Admiral's and officers' shoulders were for. I answered that they were epaulets. She wanted to know whether they were placed on their shoulders in order to be able to carry heavy loads, as the coolies in China did; and thought it would be a good idea to have some made for her chair bearers, so their shoulders would not become sore. She considered that the American admiral had given her a good idea.

The garden party for Mrs. Evans was a memorable affair. The day was beautiful. Her Majesty was in high spirits and received her guests most graciously.



## WITHIN THE GOLDEN CITY

After the formal audience was over, she stepped down from the dais and shook hands with the ladies. She told Mrs. Evans, through me, that she had enjoyed meeting the Admiral and wished him success for the future. She then retired, and the Imperial Princess acted as hostess at the banquet, which was then served. This banquet consisted of twenty-four courses—bird's nest soup, sharks' fins, bamboo shoots, a wonderful pudding composed of lotos seeds, watermelon seeds, pine-tree seeds and rice, and many other delicacies too numerous to mention.

To grace the occasion properly, yellow porcelain and a marvelous gold service were brought from the imperial treasury, where they were always stored for safekeeping, and the table was a most beautiful sight, decorated profusely with yellow chrysanthemums, the imperial color of China. This was the most brilliant function that had ever been held in the Imperial Palace when entertaining people from the Western World.

As a final touch to this never-to-be-forgotten day, the guests were invited to Her Majesty's private gardens, or grounds, called the Great Within, and there given an opportunity to view her transformed bed-chamber and various rest rooms, where she, for a time at least, was able to forget her affairs of state. During my sojourn at the court, this was the only time she

ever received visitors within this sacred building. As she bade her guests adieu she presented each with a gold ring set with pearls, and four rolls of brocaded silk. Everybody was pleased, and so was Her Majesty. Thus ended a perfect day.

Her Majesty, Tzu Hsi, the Empress Dowager of China, has passed away. The glamour of the court is no more. But the memory of this great woman, who held the destiny of her 400,000,000 subjects in the hollow of her hand for forty-eight long years, still lingers among the ruined splendors, the tragic beauties within the Golden City.





## THE ORIOLE

IN a secluded courtyard in far Shan Hsi lived the Oriole, the best beloved of a father of many children. Wu Chao was feeble and full of years, but for himself he did not fear to die. Life had been good to him, because it had given him the Oriole, most beautiful girl-child in all the wondrous hills.

There should be a husband for her, and when this happened Wu Chao could die, and he would die in happiness. But where, in all Shan Hsi, could there be found a husband for the Oriole? The worship of Wu Chao for the Oriole was beyond the comprehension of mortal men, and Wu Chao himself could not have explained it. He merely knew that she was his bit of most precious jade, his most delicate of blossoms, his gorgeous flower of the moon.

To choose a husband for her was a terrible responsi-

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bility. For if he chose unwisely, and unhappiness should come to the Oriole, it would be a great calamity that he who loved her most and best should visit unhappiness upon her. So he thought upon the matter day and night, sitting his time away in the great garden of his vast estate. The hours passed, the weeks, the moons and the years, and still he had chosen no husband for the Oriole, and as all China knows, the father must choose the husband for his girl children.

There were many men of good family in Shan Hsi, but were there any good enough for the gorgeous, wondrous Oriole? Wu Chao did not think so, and was sorely troubled.

Then determination came, and he sent for the Oriole to come to him in the garden. She came, a delicate girl-child who had become a woman so swiftly that to Wu Chao it was as though only yesterday, even an hour ago, she had been but a baby in the arms of her amah. He looked anew at this bird of golden plumage, and rubbed his old eyes. To him she was a never-ending surprise. It was impossible for Wu Chao to believe that this beautiful creature could be flesh of his flesh, and yet be so beautiful and altogether desirable.

“You sent for me, Father?”

The old gentleman peered at her and his bronzed

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old cheeks crinkled into a smile. Had those who believe that the Chinese are not endowed with sentiment gazed upon the cheeks of aged Wu Chao, they must surely have learned wherein they erred.

"I sent for you, Daughter," he inclined his head. "It is time for you to be married."

The Oriole who, though a woman, looked yet a child, started almost imperceptibly. She had known this was coming some day, yet now that the time had arrived she was just a little frightened. She knew that it was the duty of the father to choose a husband for the daughter, and she was wondering, and fearful, as to his choice.

"Whatever you desire, Father, I shall obey you," she said.

But her heart sank within her, for she knew the marriage customs. She had never thought of marriage, mostly because she dreaded it, and had hoped against hope that the usual arranged marriage would never happen to her. In her mind's eye she could see it all. Meddling matchmakers, with their talk of dowries. Wise old men endlessly discussing the wealth of families, and the affairs of prospective bride and groom, as though neither the bride nor the groom was in any way interested in the forthcoming nuptials.

It came to the Oriole that the servants in the house,



when they went to market of mornings, bartered and argued this way—over food to grace the tables of their masters! Her amah had told her much of the horse traders at the gates of Shan Hsi, arguing endlessly over the good points and the bad of their horses, long discussions as to price.

Her marriage, if arranged in the usual way—and Wu Chao was an old-fashioned official, who would as soon die of decapitation as forsake the ancient customs—would be like the bartering of the servants for food, the vociferous trading of the horse dealers at the gates.

Within her there rose a feeling of dread, even of resentment, though at the moment it did not occur to her to rebel against custom, or her father who followed the custom. Custom was immutable, and the faithful followed its dictates without question.

The Oriole trembled visibly as she fancied she could see, looking ahead into the future, the long marriage ceremony which meant so much; to the time when the groom would lift the red silk marriage veil, and gaze for the first time upon his bride. Would a shade of disappointment cross his face when he saw the countenance of his newly wedded wife? Or would he politely try to hide any exasperation he might feel?

And who—most important!—would he be?

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But she heard herself saying again to aged Wu Chao:

"Whatever you desire, Father, I shall obey you!"

Somehow, however, she found she could not turn and leave him that way. She loved her father, but she feared his decision. Something outside herself brought the words reluctantly to her lips.

"But, Father," she said softly, "if only I could choose a husband for myself!"

A frown came to the face of Wu Chao.

"That could never be!" he said. "It is not the custom! My friends, were I to permit this flouting of the customs, would heap me with blame and censure! It is better that I, your father, make a mistake in choice of a husband for you, than that I allow you to flout custom—and make a mistake! My friends would always say that both of us were deserving of whatever unhappiness such a choice might bring us!"

And the Oriole, departing, heard herself say dutifully:

"Yes, Father."

But, because she had spoken bravely of the thought which had come to her, she found herself continuing to toy with it. If only a young lady *could* choose for herself. She could then insist on many things: that the man of her choice be handsome, that he refrain

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from filling the home with concubines; that he promise to be kind and gentle with his wife.

She left her father and wandered, troubled and afraid, into her own courtyard. For the first time since she could remember, she waved her maid from her, mutely expressing her wish to stroll alone.

For a long time she stood on the bank of the winding canal which wandered, softly whispering, through the vast estate of Wu Chao. At her feet, moored to a piling of one of the many red-arched bridges which decorated her father's huge gardens, was a little boat, with a tiny sail, which her father had caused to be built for her—humoring a whim of his best beloved daughter.

She had never sailed alone in the little boat, but it was perfectly safe, and the water of the canal was shallow in case of accident. She looked all around her before stepping down into the boat. She felt a surging desire to sail away, and on and on, out of the courtyard, even, out into the vast unknown world which she had only heard about.

If she could only get away, that would end the talk of marriage, of dowries, and of family wealth, and she would never again be bothered with thoughts of prospective husbands, of thoughts as to which of the sons of wealthy families, sons meet to be her husband,

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would be chosen by her father when the time came. Fortunately, Wu Chao was in no hurry to make a choice.

But the Oriole wondered.

Would the husband be Sang Chi, who was very wealthy, but who, gossip said, spent all his substance on singsong girls in the outer city?

Would it be Lao Sung, whose face was pitted with smallpox, and whose eyes were so deeply black, reminding one of those of a snake her maid had once killed in the garden?

Would it be Chu Lun, whose temper was terrible? So terrible that there were scars of the whip on the backs of his many servants, in the vast house which yet lacked a bride, because fathers of eligible daughters were prone to pass him by as, wealthy though he was, a man who would make a slave of a wife, would, perhaps, make her merely a handmaiden of his concubines?

Reclining on the soft cushions in the bottom of the boat made for her, the Oriole watched the gentle breeze catch and spread the white silken sail, and felt herself wafted gently away from shore, and along the winding trace of the glistening canal.

She seemed, as the boat gathered way, and left a pearly wake behind in which the myriads of goldfish

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sported joyously, like a lotos flower which the wind had cast adrift from the mother stem.

The motion of the boat was soothing and gentle, and as her hand trailed in the cool waters, her eyes closed, and sleep blotted out thoughts of gabbling matchmakers, thoughts of bartering go-betweens—everything, save a certain dream which caused the bosom of the Oriole to rise and fall in excitement, though even in her dream she knew she dreamed.

She saw a man, a handsome man, and young, like herself. His voice, though she could distinguish no words, was soft and gentle, like a caress of finger tips across fevered cheeks. His eyes were dreamy, and one could peer into them deeply, after the manner of dreams. But that he was poor was evident from his dress, for it was threadbare, though the material was good. It had simply been worn too long, because, perhaps, the man of the dream could afford no other.

In her dream the Oriole spoke to the man, and he spoke to her, and though the words were all jumbled, like a song in which words were lost in the melody, and she could not grasp the meaning of a single word, in her heart she understood them all, which was why her bosom rose and fell with her excitement, in her dream.

A fresh gust of wind caused the boat to rock, and





She saw a man, a handsome man, and young, like  
herself



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the Oriole opened her eyes, frowning and disappointed to find she had been only dreaming. The boat still held steadily along the canal, keeping to its center, as though guided by invisible hands. The Oriole, sighing, strove to sleep again, hoping to regain the substance of her dream.

But it would not come. The man of the gentle voice, the soft eyes, had eluded her, and would not come again.

Then she was startled as, when she knew the voice would come no more, it really came! And now she knew it was no dream.

"I have waited here so many times," the voice said softly, "hoping that sometime you would come this way and—perhaps—remain for just a moment or two to talk with me!"

Startled, like a bird which has flown into a snare, the Oriole started to her feet in fear—and then she saw him!

At almost the same moment back at the home of the Oriole, the frown on the face of Wu Chao, which had marred his wrinkled face since those few astounding words of his best beloved daughter had so amazed and startled him, vanished utterly, giving place to a shrewd smile, which further blended into a silent laugh that

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caused his huge paunch to quiver and shake with his amusement.

For, slave to the old customs though he was, Wu Chao loved and worshiped the Oriole.

"There is even possibility," he said, "that the matter might be arranged!"

Just what he referred to, however, he did not say. It was a good secret, which might be kept, and nursed, and enjoyed. And how his many friends would talk, and try to dissuade him, when he saw fit to tell them!

Then, the Oriole, and the strange man in the garden.

"Why," she gasped, "I just dreamed . . . !"

She paused in high confusion, while the roses dyed red her cheeks—roses of self-consciousness.

"You dreamed," said the man, smiling, "of me, perhaps! But that is too much to hope for! It could not be, since you have never seen me before—though I have seen you often, from this garden."

"But you have great courage," said the Oriole, regaining some of her own, "for my father would put you in prison if he knew you visited his garden."

"He will not know it, unless you tell him. But you were speaking of a dream—of me? I thought you were sleeping, for a few moments ago I called softly to you, as you floated past in your boat—and when you

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did not answer I ran after you, calling again! You must have been dreaming. Your eyes were open, but you did not seem to be seeing whatever may have been before them. It explains your dream, perhaps?"

Why, now that she saw, in the flesh, the man of whom she had dreamed, did her bosom rise and fall once more with excitement, as it had in her dream, which she had been sure was only a dream? And why did she wish to continue talking with this man, a total stranger, a man, moreover, who must be very poor, since his clothing was so threadbare? And why did she suddenly wish to place her finger tips against his cheeks, which looked so soft? For shame! Such thoughts as these from a lady of a wealthy courtyard! But she did not feel ashamed.

"And why," she heard herself asking, "have you watched me? Why do you talk to me?"

"Should I tell you truly?" he asked. "May I not, just this once? For I am very poor, and you are the daughter of a wealthy official. It can do you no harm if I tell you, and I shall be so much happier for having told you—and we may never see each other again. My name is Liu Shen. . . ."

"And I am simply the Oriole, daughter of Wu Chao! And, since we may never meet again—yes, I wish you would tell me!"



For a full minute he hesitated, while his lips moved soundlessly, as though, now that opportunity was granted him to speak, his courage failed him.

"I watched you," he said, "many times, for many days, and it came to me that I simply must talk with you, even though I were cast into prison for my temerity. I shall tell you! You are everything I could love in a woman! For such a one as you—though I knew it impossible—I would give my life! I have learned to worship you, to adore you—and when I say that I love you, that I would do anything for the privilege of holding your hands, if only for the time of a few heartbeats—I say it with the knowledge that it is all impossible, and that I must never, as long as life lasts, see you again, or try to talk to you!"

He paused, watching the effect of his words.

"Please!" said the Oriole. "Please go on!"

"What more is there?" he answered, his voice almost a whisper. "Unless . . . !"

He did not go on, but it came to the Oriole that she knew what else he would have said. Why had his words, spoken so simply, so changed the world in which the Oriole lived—the courtyard world which she knew? For the trees which bore the blossoms of springtime seemed to whisper more excitedly, as though telling one another of sweet secrets. The per-

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fume of the blossoms seemed suddenly so much sweeter. She felt that she never before had realized the gentle enchantment of this vast garden. But, because she was honest, she admitted to herself the reason. The garden was more lovely, the perfume of the flowers more delicate and alluring, the whispering of the trees more dreamy and somnolent, because this stranger had spoken. She realized that, when he left, to return no more, all the enchantment of the garden would vanish with him.

She scarcely understood herself when she felt, and heard, her own words come tumbling forth.

"And you, in my dream," she faltered, "were the man of my choice! I tell you now because you have promised to go, and not come back again. I knew that I loved you, that I desired above all things to touch your cheeks with the palms of my hands. I knew that you would be kind and gentle, and thoughtful of me always, if . . ."

"Yes," he said softly, "if . . ."

So low as to seem but a whisper, so softly as to be but part of the whispering in the garden, she answered him.

"If we were married!" she said.

"Oriole! Precious bit of jade," said Liu Shen. "Is

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it so impossible then? But of course it is! I am very poor. . . .”

“But my father, Liu Shen, is very wealthy, and there will be a huge dowry. . . .”

“I could not use your dowry, my Oriole, because I am proud, and in time you would grow to hate me for it!”

“Then I would refuse the dowry,” said the Oriole passionately, “and go with you wherever you might go! For now I know . . . please, please, Liu Shen, leave me now . . .”

“But must it be for always?”

And, astounded at herself, the Oriole heard herself making answer.

“Tomorrow!” she said. “I will have a message for you! I shall write it, and toss the paper to you, over the wall! You live in the next courtyard?”

He nodded, his eyes bright with hope, and watched the Oriole who, forgetting her boat of the white silk sail, stepped to the path which paralleled the canal, and almost ran toward the summerhouse on the estate. Liu Shen looked after her, his eyes very bright; but when he looked down at his threadbare clothing, he shook his head in sorrow.

But on the morrow she came again, and tossed a message over the wall. It was weighted with a red

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apple from one of the many trees, and tied in a little handkerchief belonging to the Oriole.

The first message read:

"There may yet be hope, for Father has a plan! I shall tell you of it as I hear, and perhaps . . ."

Liu Shen, placing the handkerchief next his heart, had to wait another day to discover what came after the "perhaps."

But in the heart of the Oriole there was wild excitement. And the friends of Wu Chao were babbling from one end to the other of Shan Hsi. For Wu Chao had told his friends something of what he had first told his daughter, the best beloved of his children. And this is what he had told the Oriole:

"I have arrived at a decision," he had said. "I warn you that it is a most unusual one; but I can do nothing else, because I love you so much, and am so afraid I might make a mistake. I know that the heart of my Oriole is of pure gold, and that it would not lead her into error."

"Yes, Father?"

"I have decided," continued Wu Chao, while the Oriole trembled like a caught bird, "that I will not choose a husband for you, but that you shall choose a husband for yourself!"

"But, Father," cried the Oriole, striving to still the

tumultuous pounding of her heart, "all fathers choose husbands for their daughters! I am afraid . . ."

Wu Chao smiled, and dismissed the Oriole—and, a bit later, another message was tossed over the wall, into the waiting hands of Liu Shen.

"I have an idea," she said, "but I must depend upon you, somehow, to do your part! I am to choose my own husband, from among a score who are eligible! Two moons hence they will gather in our courtyard, for me to make my choice. I shall tell you my plans, bit by bit, as I plan them! Listen to the rumors in Shan Hsi, and make your own plans—and remember that all our future happiness depends upon your skill! And there shall be a message every day, tossed over the wall—which you must catch before it strikes the ground! For your skill in this may decide all the future for us!"

How very mysterious! But Liu Shen trusted, and loved, the Oriole, and his trust and love increased day by day—until there were times when thought of her was like a numb pain inside his heart. But he practiced catching her messages, until he became quite skilled; and, weeks before the appointed day, he sent a message back to her which said that for ten straight times he had caught her weighted messages, which had



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not touched the ground. But even as he wrote, he wondered, and was puzzled.

But the Oriole only smiled, and her eyes were dancing.

Two more days passed. Three. Four. Then the Oriole informed her father that she was ready to proceed. Her cheeks were high colored with the roses of excitement as she made known her plan. To Wu Chao the plan must have seemed good, for many times as she told it he smiled, and even laughed.

"It is a good plan, Daughter," he told her, "and it is destined to succeed."

To carry out the plan of the Oriole required that every father of every eligible son be taken into the confidence of Wu Chao, and because he was high in the counsels of the government, the others agreed with him that the plan was good, whatever each one of them might have thought within the secret recesses of his heart.

The family needleworkers were pressed into service, and the date of the experiment set, while excitement grew and grew throughout Shan Hsi. Many predicted failure of the scheme, because it broke all precedent; some predicted success because, as far as anyone knew, aged Wu Chao had never made a mistake in all his life of service to his government.

At last the day came when the Oriole was to make her choice. There was the usual courtyard surrounded by the buildings of the Wu Chao home. The servants' quarters, the living quarters of the family, and the little doll-houses of the concubines of Wu Chao. And there was a balcony.

It was this balcony which had given the Oriole her first idea of how she should go about the serious business of choosing her husband, for it figured, foremost of everything, in her scheme.

There were twenty and three young men who came at the invitation of old Wu Chao. The old gentleman sat on the balcony, with the fathers of the eligible men in chairs to right and left of him. All smoked thoughtfully, like patriarchs of a venerable tribe. All were dressed in robes of state, for this was a momentous occasion. The young men, too, were dressed in robes of great richness—all save one.

Twenty and three young men, all of wealthy families of rank sufficiently elevated to make them eligible for the delicate hand of the Oriole. All were eager to win her, and the scheme had been so worked out that when the Oriole made her choice, it would be done so that those who were not chosen would not feel themselves slighted. Twenty and two would be disap-

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pointed, but not one would be slighted . . . it had required much thought on the part of the Oriole.

They lined up there in the courtyard below the balcony upon which, presently, the Oriole was to appear. Their gorgeous robes seemed to blend with the delicate colors of the flowers, to match the flaming hues of the goldfish in the little pond. Their caps were the caps of high rank, and they wore the coral buttons as insignia. It was a brave company. Such a company might have been chosen to take a momentous message to the throne.

The heart of the Oriole beat high with excitement, and her cheeks were tinged with little roses of red when she finally appeared. A dignified gasp went along the row of young men who stared up, discreetly, at this delightful little daughter of Wu Chao. Even the old men, fathers of the young ones below, shifted in their places, and some there were who secretly wished themselves young again, that they might stand in line with those men who were their sons.

They waited, all of them, seeming scarcely to breathe, while the bright eyes of the Oriole, peering intently from face to face, sought among the men below for Liu Shen. Would he manage his part? Would he be able to come?

And so, looking from face to face, her eyes fell at

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last upon the upturned face of the handsomest in all the gathering, and her little fluttering heart missed a beat or two for it was Liu Shen.

And then, her eyes on this man, whose face seemed to shine among the others as a bright pearl among pebbles—and even the pebbles were desirable!—she told her plan.

It seemed bold, but, because it was bold, it excited them all, even the fathers of the sons.

“I have here in my hand,” she said softly, and even her voice caused a ripple, like soundless applause, to go through the young men below who stood so straight side by side, “a ball of silk. It is made of the finest silk to be had, because it is a symbol! Note how its colors shift as I turn it! It shines like the backs of my own goldfish! It shimmers in the sun! It is altogether lovely—because it is a symbol. It represents the heart of the Oriole! Presently I shall toss it down among you, and the man who catches it will . . .”

But she found she could not say it. After all, an unmarried girl-child could not well be so bold before so many men. One would be chosen, and it would not be well for those not chosen to hear her say anything that even remotely hinted of something brazen and not altogether genteel and ladylike. But they understood

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what she would have said, and hearts beat higher for her, with desire for her, because she had been too shy to put her thoughts entirely into words. The man who caught the ball would be her husband!

The face of him who was so handsome, whose gown, which had been so gorgeous, now was almost threadbare, was upturned toward her, his mouth slightly open as though he drank in every word—and in his eyes was a challenge. He seemed so strong, so self-reliant.

The Oriole raised the ball, turning it in her supple little fingers. They noted how it glistened and coruscated in the sun. In a second it would come plunging down among them, and the young man who caught it would be the husband of this gorgeous, doll-like creature who stood above them on the balcony, like a little judge to pass sentence.

Each man thought, of course, that *he* must surely be the one who would catch the ball which represented the heart of the Oriole. Each father on the balcony above hoped in his secret heart that his son would be the successful one. But there was a father missing, though none noted it at the time. The father of the man with the threadbare gown was dead.

For a long moment the Oriole held the ball poised,



and, while she did this, all present held their breath and scarcely moved lest a spell be broken. Then, bright as fire in the sun, the ball went over the rail of the balcony, over and down. There was too much excitement for any to take thought of a strange circumstance: the Oriole had tossed the shiny ball of soft silk squarely at the man with the handsome face whose gown was threadbare.

Liu Shen caught the ball deftly, as though he had practiced the game in times past, and bowed deeply to his affianced!

But, long after all the young men, and their fathers, had left the courtyard of Wu Chao, Wu Chao himself sat on—and ever and anon his old cheeks crinkled with laughter, and his great paunch moved with the agitation of his mirth.

“Verily,” he told himself, “is this child indeed my daughter! How delightful the pretense of those two children! And not a one of those sons, or of the fathers, noted that one man lacked a father! It is a wonderful secret—which is no secret at all! Liu Shen and the Oriole are very clever, and they know many things—but neither realizes that China has no secrets, and that the courtyard of Wu Chao is a courtyard filled with servants—who have eyes which see, and ears

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which hear—everything! And tongues which have no secrets from the master!”

And Wu Chao laughed again, for many moments, deep within him.





## THE GOLDEN GODDESS OF TRAGEDY

ONE of the greatest of experiences of my life came to me in Paris many years ago when my father, the late Lord Yu Keng, was Chinese Minister to France.

I met Madame Sarah Bernhardt!

I saw her several times before I actually met her, and upon each successive occasion my interest and enthusiasm—and idol worship—grew so rapidly that I could scarcely contain myself. That first time was at the French Theater, in the foyer, where a grand bazaar was being held for charity. I took a very, to me, important part in the proceeding. I carried a basket and sold little bunches of roses at varying prices, ranging from ten francs to whatever I could persuade buyers to pay. That was a busy day, and the foyer was absolutely packed with people, crowded into the space between the stalls.

## THE GOLDEN GODDESS OF TRAGEDY

I was doing quite well and gentlemen were buying my flowers freely for their buttonholes when the whisper, electric and startling, went through the crowd, which for a moment fell silent:

“Madame Sarah Bernhardt is here!”

Of course I had heard of Madame Bernhardt. Who hadn't and has not? I knew that Paris, all France in fact, adored the great actress. I forgot that I was supposed to be making much money for charity and am afraid that business, as far as I was concerned, suffered because of my interest in Madame Bernhardt. Of course I was not the only one, else there would have been no electric whisper. Madame Bernhardt was a striking woman. I needed no one to point her out.

All that was necessary was to know that she was present. One instantly singled her out in a crowd because she was so utterly different.

When first I saw my divinity, she was dressed in purple velvet, a miracle of straight lines. Even her shoes were of purple velvet. She stood as straight as a soldier on parade. You may be sure that I looked with all my might and almost memorized every detail of her costume. She was something of an eccentric in the matter of dress, her clothing being made especially for her by her own tailor. Her hat was what

is called a "picture hat," topped by gorgeous plumes in which were blended two different colors—gold and purple. The gold began at the base of the quills and gradually melted into the purple at the tips of the plumes.

Madame looked rather old and I was to marvel at this fact later when I saw her on the stage. There was another thing about her that struck me as strange, since I had never before seen it save in China. Madame Bernhardt wore a gold ring on the left thumb and a second gold ring on the index finger of her right hand. There was no jewelry on her other thumb or fingers, which I thought extremely odd. Everything about her, as a matter of fact, seemed extraordinary. I did not learn until later that she cultivated this aura of unusualness.

The thumb ring and the ring on the index finger of her right hand matched the golden chain about her neck. This chain hung quite low and in the gold pendant several precious stones were set.

How I wished to go boldly up and address her! I fancy I should have done so, too, had not the hostess of the bazaar called me away and sent me back to my tasks. But my mind was no longer on my work. I could only think of this striking woman whom I had merely glimpsed in passing, and promised myself that



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I would make an opportunity to see her again, and if possible speak to her.

But this time it was not to be, for suddenly there came a dread cry:

“Fire! Fire!”

Instantly all was pandemonium. In the bedlam that resulted I lost sight of Madame Bernhardt. The Théâtre Français was badly arranged as to exits. The crowd inside the theater, where a performance was going on, burst through the doors into the crowd that filled the foyer, while those in the foyer fought with them to reach the outer doors. My sister and I, fortunately, were together when the alarm broke. I was just selling a bouquet to a gentleman. The sale was not consummated, for the gentleman suddenly caught the hands of my sister and myself and fought a way for us to the exit. I glanced back into the theater and saw Mademoiselle Henriot, all in white, on the stage.

How well I remember the funerals, for many were killed in this fire, including Mademoiselle Henriot.

Out of it all grew a resolve on my part: I must actually speak with Madame Bernhardt. My mother knew her and I began to bother her to arrange a meeting. Mother's reply to my begging was always the same:

“You are foolish! It is impossible. Madame Bern-

hardt is a great artist. She has no time for children!"

I did not understand genius, greatness of any kind, nor could I see why Madame Bernhardt should place a taboo on children. I meant to have my way.

It was some time before I saw her again, and then I actually exchanged a few words with the great artist. My sister and I were making social calls with Mother, and Madame Bernhardt was at one of the homes we visited. She spoke but a few words of English. We conversed in French, and she seemed surprised that one of my nationality, so young and born in the Orient, should speak the language. She did me the honor to say that I spoke it very well. I will wager that when I left, after meeting Madame Bernhardt, not a person in all Paris trod on such roseate clouds as I!

This time she was dressed in black. Those straight lines again. She wore a ruff of white lace and the lace on her long sleeves almost covered her hands. She again wore a ring on her left thumb and one on her right index finger, but now they were of black onyx, as was the pendant. In addition she wore a string of pearls reaching almost to her knees. She did not wear a hat, and, if memory serves, her hair was a dark brown with a tendency to curl. I did not think of her hair as especially attractive—then.

I managed to tell her that I was learning dancing

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from Isadora Duncan, singing from someone else; that I was tired of taking lessons from Isadora Duncan and wished to become a ballet dancer. She smiled at me, rather pityingly, I thought, and when I went on to tell her that I was learning to recite French poetry she told me she would like to hear me some time—and to me that seemed a promise for the very next day. Mother disabused me of this idea, though I begged her to write to Madame Bernhardt and remind her of her promise to hear me.

But the days succeeded one another with monotonous regularity and Madame Bernhardt had apparently forgotten. Mother, in spite of my teasing, refused to remind her, and told me the only thing I could do was wait until Madame Bernhardt remembered of her own accord.

It seemed to me that the time would never come. I managed to wheedle Mother into allowing me to attend the theater where Madame Bernhardt was playing in "L'Aiglon," in which she enacted the stellar rôle, that of Napoleon's young son. To me her performance was the most wonderful in all my experience. To this day, though I have seen many plays, that one stands out in memory brightest because of Madame Bernhardt. How long the play lasted I have no way of knowing, but it could have continued forever and I

would never have grown tired. Nor would the audience, for while Madame Bernhardt was on the stage no one seemed even to breathe. What a boy she made! White kid breeches and black boots reaching almost to the knee, with golden trimmings. Gorgeous!

But her voice! Clear as crystal, it seemed fairly to tinkle in the silent auditorium. One word she repeated over and over, calling out the name of Flambeau, the retainer of l'Aiglon, and her voice rolled, drawing out the name in a way that drew the very hearts from the bosoms of those that heard her—and did not stir as they listened, lest they miss one single inflection of that marvelous voice.

I still can hear her:

*"Flambeau! Flambeau!"*

The final scene stands out, too: the death of the Eaglet. The lad's mother was beside the bed. She had brought a bouquet of violets. The boy was smelling the bouquet—and one could actually see his cheeks grow pale with approaching death! I marveled how Madame Bernhardt could do it, for there was no mistaking the fact that her face actually became white in this deathbed scene. Later I learned there was some sort of drug in the bouquet whose odor when inhaled made the color recede from the cheeks. She herself

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told me later she wore tight rubber corsets to make her look like a boy in "L'Aiglon."

Madame Bernhardt also played in "La Dame aux Camélias." My mother decided that I was too young to see this play. I was also forbidden to investigate the details, but children, especially willful ones, will manage somehow, and so I learned the story of the play.

Then came the great day when I returned home to the Chinese Embassy to hear the excited whisperings among our French and Chinese servitors:

"Madame Bernhardt is here!"

She had been received at the embassy as though she had been a queen of France. I found it difficult to understand this, not comprehending that to the French Madame Bernhardt was just that. Since I had last spoken to her I had been learning to recite poetry with music, and I was eager to display my learning to Madame, but children were to be seen and not heard. Finally my mother allowed me to go in and say a few words to her, curtsy and retire.

It was not until some time later that the promise Madame Bernhardt had made me seemed sure of coming true. My sister, my brothers and I were preparing to give a play for our friends at the embassy. We chose "Sweet Lavender" and went into strenuous rehearsal.



Then, who should come to witness rehearsals one day but the great lady herself! I saw her at once and resolved to outdo myself in "Sweet Lavender" in order to get a word from her. After the rehearsal she beckoned me to her. The play, of course, was in English, which she did not understand, save for a few words, but she knew the play and recognized the scene we were rehearsing.

"You did it very well," she told me—heart be still!—"but there are a number of faults that should be corrected. Let me teach you! Come to me and I will give you some tips."

I was not to be put off as before, and in spite of warning glances from Mother I blurted out: "When?"

Madame Bernhardt smiled graciously.

"Tomorrow at four!" she told me.

A whole century elapsed before the next afternoon. Finally four o'clock arrived! My Chinese maid went with me. I am sorry I cannot remember the address of the home of Madame Bernhardt, but there are many identifying things I recall about it. The oldness of it, its two stories, with a balcony above the door that bulged at the bottom of the rail like a basket. I noted the window boxes to right and left, with their brilliant geraniums, and then . . .

A butler resplendent as a general, asking for my

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card. I had none, but told him who I was and that Madame Bernhardt was expecting me. We entered the door. Ahead was a full-length mirror and there were oval mirrors on the walls to right and left. I had opportunity to look into each of them and to say to my reflection, whose cheeks were flushed with excitement: "Der Ling, do you realize this house is Madame Bernhardt's very own, and that *you* are here, and that she will see *you*?" Madame's maid came and asked me to wait a moment.

I entered the drawing-room, which was furnished in the style of Louis XV, a dazzling room of gold, and another mirror, in which I again saw the flushed face of the most excited girl in Paris. While awaiting the summons I looked about me. Paneled doors, chairs and tables upholstered in pale yellow—a blending of cream, a pale shade of green and gold. The maid, in black save for white lace cap and trimmings at neck and sleeves, came to tell me Madame would receive me in her boudoir, where it would be more cozy. I climbed the stairs. I entered the presence. But for a moment I merely gasped in wonder and surveyed the dressing-room of the idol of Paris.

Gorgeous is the only word for it. A strange combination, as eccentric as Madame Bernhardt herself. Black satin wall panels, with golden buttons in the

center of each panel, the panels separated by strips of wood of the color of old ivory. The ceiling was covered with gold and black brocade, shirred all around, the whole thing working in toward the exact center of the ceiling like a strange sort of star or pinwheel. Madame Bernhardt was dressed in golden gauze trimmed with gold lace; and this time her rings, on the same thumb and index finger, were gold matching her pendant and earrings. She wore a girdle that was a chain of gold. Her slippers also were of gold.

Her dressing table . . . her chaise longue . . . took my breath. She served tea in white cups with gold rims, and the spoons and tea were golden. Even to-day I can recall her gracefulness as she served me, a mere child, as though I had been a grand dame of France. With the tea she served a kind of whipped cream with garlic flavor.

Then we talked, and this, as nearly as I can remember, was what she told me.

"Remember when you cross the stage from the right that the audience is on your left. Always step with the foot away from the audience, so that none will miss your action. Never show the palms of your hands when you dance. Never forget the audience and that the audience wishes to see everything you do. In sitting, face to the right or left, but never toward the

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audience. You tell me you wish to become a ballet dancer. Do not think of it, my child. You are also learning to sing. You wish to be a great actress. You wish to do too many things! Learn one thing well, and specialize on that one thing no matter how tiresome it may become. Continue your studies with Isadora Duncan by all means, for, you will see, one day she will be a great artist! She is a marvelous dancer, because she dances with her soul, and the soul must be in whatever the true artist does!"

"That is so," I told Madame; "and I like dancing myself, but my real ambition is to become an artist, as you are. I want to play in great dramatic parts on the stage, as you do. And this reminds me that there is a question I wish to ask you: You play in 'La Dame aux Camélias,' and I am not allowed to see you in that play or to read the story—why is that?"

This was her answer (you must remember that I am calling back the words from a deep well of memory and that perhaps I haven't recalled them all, or recalled them exactly):

"I can readily understand why you are not allowed to see me in that play, because you are so young. It is my best play, but it deals with love, and the old ladies across the Seine (French aristocrats) are narrow-minded and do not think that young girls should know

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about love. They would think me very wicked for even mentioning the word to you! The play deals with love—love that is tragic and attains to greatness through sacrifice. This is perhaps all I should tell you about the play, and I might be condemned for even telling this much. However, I am going on, just the same.

“You may have heard much about me. I know that the old ladies across the river, while they admire me as an artist, regard me as sadly lacking in morals, which is understandable when one knows their limitations. But my own life—I am old now—is best exemplified in a song the French have, in which this line occurs: ‘The pleasure of love lasts for but a moment, the sorrow of love lasts forever!’ A bitter truth, as I have learned, but still I would change nothing. Love is essential, even to the old ladies over the river. One cannot exist without love, even though one knows when one enjoys it that it will leave scars upon both body and soul. Do you know why I am successful in a play of love? While I am playing my part I am thinking of my own real love. I close my eyes and imagine I am living my real life, and the man who plays opposite me is my real love. Also my play ‘Teodora’ is a strong love play, and I am successful in it for exactly the same reason. All artists who are really great have suffered greatly.



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I do not wish to discourage you in having a career like mine, but it is tragic and life is not happy."

"I do not think," I told her, my eagerness somewhat dampened, "that my father would allow me to become a professional, anyway!"

"Your father, my dear child," she said, "is perfectly right! But still, one's life is like a play. The grave is the backdrop and those whom you meet during life are the players; but there are no curtain calls! And remember this: fame is fleeting. No matter how great you may become as an artist, when you die the world forgets you—even your dearest friends."

"No, no!" I protested. "That cannot be entirely true! Certainly not in your case! I am sure that you will not be forgotten, ever!"

She shook her head, sadly, I thought, and I noted that her eyes were looking into some far-away, to-me-invisible distance. Then, quite suddenly, as though she had shaken off somber thoughts, she spoke again:

"Yes, they will forget me, my dear. But not while I live! And besides, why should I worry now? Look out of that window! The sun is shining! Don't you hear the birds—making love, no doubt! The flowers in my window boxes are beautiful to see, delicious to smell, and so the world, while we are in it, is not bad at all."

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She said she thought she had the music that went with a poem I was learning to recite. She found it, took me to another room, where there was a piano, and accompanied me as I recited the verses. Then, step by step, she took me over the whole thing, pointing out this error and that, proving to me in the end that I had much indeed to learn. The second time over, and the third, and fourth, she would stop me when I erred and explain to me with gracious patience how I could correct my faults, which must have been legion.

Before I left after that first visit she took me to her bedroom. My memory is of a huge bed with overhanging canopy of old rose velvet, the drapery caught back by golden cords. The bed rested on a platform. The bedroom was a wonderful place, too, and Madame Bernhardt's dressing table . . . well, I could have preened myself before the great mirror and dabbled in the bottles and jars for hours had there been time. After all, Madame Bernhardt was a very busy, much-sought woman, and she had already given precious hours to a Manchu child. But she liked me, and to-day I am glad, and proud, that this was so. In the bedroom she showed me one of her nightgowns—black as a crow's wing, with gold lace trimmings!

My maid was called from the maids' quarters and I

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left the home of Madame Bernhardt, which I was never to forget. I recalled the details of the rooms well enough to copy them years later in my own home in Shanghai.

One day my sister and I were driving along the Bois de Boulogne, where people go to see and be seen. We were not escorted at the time, else this incident might perhaps never have transpired.

But . . .

We met Madame Bernhardt again. What a splendid equipage she had, but I, accustomed to magnificent trappings, was far more interested in Madame Bernhardt herself. Prancing horses with lace fringe on their blinders, prancing horses that threw out their feet proudly as though realizing that they drew the great Bernhardt. She was dressed all in white and she carried a white parasol. On her breast was a pink camellia.

I wished above all things to talk to her, especially here where everyone knew her. I wanted people to see me speaking with *the* Bernhardt. But I was somewhat afraid.

Our Chinese coachman turned and drove back along the Bois and we met Madame Bernhardt again and, wonder of wonders, she saw and recognized me, bowed and gave me a sweet smile as we passed.

Parisian traffic assumed the rôle of fate when we

turned again and passed once more. A jam occurred when our wheels were hub-to-hub with the carriage in which rode Sarah Bernhardt, with her fancy coachman and valet.

Without warning she said to me:

"Let us go to the Château Madrid. I will meet you there!"

Thrilled? I should say! I couldn't give the order to our *mafoo* quickly enough. When my sister and I got turned around and reached the Château Madrid, Madame Bernhardt had already reached the place and so we had tea together.

"I do not like to come to a place like this," she told me.

"Why?"

"Because people stare at me so! I do not mind them staring at me on the stage, but it chills me to have them stare at me and whisper when I am in a place like this. I seldom come to such places!"

Of course this thrilled me again, since it seemed that she had made this concession to have a few words with me.

"Oh," I exclaimed, "I know what you mean. Everywhere you go people nudge one another and say: 'There goes Sarah Bernhardt!' Why, I would give anything if people noticed me like that!"

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"My dear," she replied, "you may think so now, but later you would grow to hate it! I would far rather be the daughter of a diplomat, as you are, than be Madame Sarah Bernhardt and be stared at by everybody!"

After a time, during which we merely sat and studied the face of Bernhardt, she stared away at a beautiful waterfall which could be seen from the château.

"Look at that waterfall," she said suddenly. "Note how it keeps going on and on, never stopping? Would it not be wonderful if life were like that and could go on forever?"

Then, of course, I could not understand what she meant. Now it seems to me that she was realizing that she was growing old and that she hated and resented it.

After that I saw her many times on the stage and on another thrilling visit. This last visit was not so long as the previous one.

"I am very busy today," Madame Bernhardt told me, "and I cannot entertain you. I can give you an hour!"

But how graciously she gave me that hour! How painstakingly she went over with me, again and yet again, the points she had discussed with me during my last visit; how I should walk on the stage, how I should enunciate French in poetry recitals.



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"You will succeed," she told me in parting. "You will be a great artist if you study one thing and continue in that! That is what Isadora Duncan is doing and the whole world will hear of her . . . wait and see!"

The whole world did hear of Isadora Duncan, just as Bernhardt predicted: but to me, at that time, Isadora Duncan was but a teacher of dancing, who taught me for hire. What had I to do with dancing teachers?

I was a pupil of Bernhardt.

Today it is a proud claim to make. The trouble is that I did not heed her instructions as well as I should have. There was only one of her; there will not be another, at least in my time. She was the golden goddess of tragedy, at whose feet the world bowed down in worship—and I was one of the least of her devoted worshipers.





## THE SCARF OF PLUM BLOSSOM

HIS MAJESTY MING HUANG sat in the midst of his many wives and concubines, and watched the dancing of Plum Blossom. A glorious little lady he had always thought her—up until yesterday, when a Prince of the Royal House whom he had not seen for a year had come to pay homage after a long sojourn in Mongolia.

Prince Lao had married during that year, and his wife Jade Circle was beautiful.

Ming Huang, youngest of Oriental emperors, and the handsomest man in all the Celestial Kingdom, was a connoisseur of feminine beauty, and until yesterday he had thought all his exacting ideals embodied in the fragile person of Plum Blossom.

He watched her now, broodingly, as she danced at the foot of the throne, while the other wives and concubines kept perfectly still, as befits lesser wives when

the favorite is striving to please His Majesty. Plum Blossom . . . well, Plum Blossom, for a year, had been the pride of His Majesty's heart, the glory of his life, the gem of his reign—and lesser wives, if they would remain in grace, must withdraw into the background as much as possible in the presence of the favorite.

What a gorgeous creature was Plum Blossom!

She danced the lilting dance of the unwinding scarf, and in all China there was never a dancer half so skillful as she. Her little feet, which would have fitted snugly into a tiny tea-cup, twinkled over the mirror-like floor like white lilies. Alabaster masterpieces, those feet, delight to the eyes of Ming Huang.

Before the throne danced Plum Blossom, and her eyes, no matter how she turned—and no dancer in the seraglio was more supple, or ingenious in the dance—never left His Majesty Ming Huang. For she was his favorite, and she loved him, loved him as it is given few ladies to love. He had merely taken her as secondary wife, after the custom, and she had stolen his heart, for which, however, she had given her own in return.

Her eyes told him that as she danced. Great black eyes as deep as the sea. Eyes like apricots, His Majesty had said; lips like cherries newly ripe; hair like

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the wings of a crow after a rain; cheeks and body of white jade. Plum Blossom, favorite of His Majesty Ming Huang. The other wives and concubines were present, enjoying the dancing of Plum Blossom with Ming Huang, solely because His Majesty wished her to be an object lesson to the others.

"Become as beautiful as Plum Blossom," he might have said, but did not, because he believed in subtle suggestion, "and dance as divinely as she, and perhaps—who knows?—you, too, may become a favorite of Ming Huang."

Oh, they knew, those wives and concubines. But there were things they did not know. Things that even Plum Blossom did not know, for these things were hidden deeply in the heart of His Majesty, and because of his thoughts he was sorely troubled.

He had seen Jade Circle, and her memory would never again be effaced from his heart. And she was a wife of a Prince of the Royal House. No wonder His Majesty brooded; for there are things that even an Emperor may not do.

A connoisseur of women.

Hands above her head, her delicate palms etching patterns in the air with all the witchery of a graceful little lady who dances to please and postures to captivate and hold, she swayed and stepped before the

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throne. Always her dancing had pleased her royal master, and always her heart had been gladdened when she had seen in his eyes that he adored her. But today there was a catch in her heart, because the look in his brooding eyes baffled her.

But she only danced the harder, attaining new figures more graceful than any she had hitherto invented, a dance that, had there been a painter in oils, might have been profitably preserved forever to inspire the delight of men.

Lithe, slender body, fragile as peachbloom, supple as—as—supple as only Plum Blossom could be.

She was approaching the climax of her dance. Wrapped round and round her slender body was the gorgeous scarf Ming Huang had given her, because it so perfectly matched her beauty. Tightly it encompassed her, endowing the lines of her body with added grace upon which only Ming Huang, and his wives and concubines, might dare to gaze.

Her little hands unfastened the end of the long scarf which wrapped her. Madly she gained speed in her dance. Her cherry red lips were parted in a dewy smile. *This* part of the dance would erase that brooding look from the face of Ming Huang. It always had before.

Swiftly revolving on her toes, like a human top—but



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more beautifully graceful than any top—she allowed the wind created by her dance to unwrap the gauzy scarf from her body. The end of it whipped out gracefully, a silken streamer which fluttered softly, like the wings of a dove. As long as the palace room itself, was that scarf, and the dancer, to dance this dance as it should be done, must unwrap all the scarf before its end should touch the floor. Plum Blossom smiled, because for her the difficult, almost impossible feat was easy. Practice had attained for her that perfection which even the gods might envy.

Broodingly Ming Huang watched her, his eyes narrowing moment by moment. The other wives and concubines swayed lightly, in sympathy with the swaying of Plum Blossom.

Swiftly the scarf unwound, streaming out from the firm slim body of Plum Blossom. Feet and yards streamed out as the scarf was unwound by the dance. Longer and longer became the gaudy, perfumed streamer. As the dance neared its end, the dancer seemed to be aloft on a cloud, floating, and trailing the cloud with her. It rolled and billowed, but without sound.

Then, the end.

Down dropped Plum Blossom before her master, her eyes pleading, begging him for a glance of appreci-

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ation; for Plum Blossom knew her own artistry, and today she had surpassed herself. Down, covering her, as birds may cover a sleeping babe with leaves, fluttered the scarf, to lie in folds and billows over the white-jade body of Plum Blossom.

But His Majesty gave no sign.

He did not even look down. He peered into some vast distance, at some vision which his wives and concubines could not see.

"He did not even see my dance!" cried the heart of Plum Blossom. "He did not even see!"

Then, tremulously, she addressed His Majesty:

"My master is not pleased with my dance?" There was something of agony in the voice of Plum Blossom, and there was agony in her heart which her voice expressed.

Suddenly His Majesty waved his hand.

"Leave me!" he said. "I would be alone!"

When the women, fearful and wondering, and with Plum Blossom almost in tears, had quitted the presence of His Majesty, Ming Huang sent for the Chief Eunuch. He had made up his mind.

"Send messengers to the home of Prince Lao and bid him come to me at once!"

The Chief Eunuch kowtowed and backed from the Presence. He knew all the gossip of the court, did the

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Chief Eunuch, for he was the court's unofficial "manager of affairs." He was friendly to all, a friend to none—not even the Emperor. He guessed, even as Ming Huang spoke, why His Majesty desired speech with Prince Lao.

After he had left, Ming Huang waited. He waited impatiently, his face a somber mask. And he was dreaming. It was the continuation of a dream which had been with him since he had ascended the throne. The dream had faded somewhat since Plum Blossom had joined his seraglio—but now it was back again, stronger and more compelling than ever before.

Ming Huang dreamed a dream of a perfect woman!

The woman of his dream must please him in every way. She must be brilliant; but not so brilliant as to outshine her master. She must be entirely graceful. She must speak when he desired her to speak, and only then, and she must know when to speak without being told. Perfection! He had thought, a year ago, that he had found her in the person of Plum Blossom. Now he knew this untrue.

For today the feet of Plum Blossom had not twinkled over the flagstones as marvelously as His Majesty expected of his ideal. There had been something indefinably awkward in the movements of her hands and arms; her body had been supple, perhaps a bit too

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supple; her cherry lips seemed not so redly ripe as heretofore; the white jade of her seemed tarnished in a way that only the idealist, Ming Huang, might have noticed. Indefinable yet apparent—Plum Blossom had failed him!

Then Prince Lao was announced. He entered in stately fashion, and performed the customary kowtows.

"Your wife, Jade Circle," said His Majesty without preamble, as though eager to finish an unwelcome duty, "is the perfect woman! She is the loveliest woman these eyes of mine have ever seen! My heart cries out with love for her! I desire to possess as mine own the gorgeous perfection of Jade Circle."

"But she is my wife, Your Majesty!" said Prince Lao, without changing expression in the least.

"It is not customary, I know," replied His Majesty, "for even the Emperor to take as favorite wife of another! But . . . Prince Lao, if I do not possess Jade Circle, my life is ended. For me she is the beginning and the end! I will give you the half of my empire for her!"

A shadow of a smile crossed the face of the Prince.

"I do not wish the half of Your Majesty's empire," he stated. "Your Majesty's desire is my law, as always! It is unusual, and people will talk but . . . I have plenty, and need none of Your Majesty's empire!"

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Jade Circle and I were betrothed and wed after the custom. Our marriage was arranged by her parents and mine, and she has never loved me! I have noted that she has been very moody since she saw Your Majesty yesterday, and it seems to me that perhaps she, too, has lost her heart—to Your Majesty! Therefore I shall place no hindrance between you. She never loved me; I give her to you freely!”

Meanwhile Plum Blossom, weeping, had sent for the Chief Eunuch.

“His Majesty was not pleased with me today,” she wept. “He scarcely noted the beauty of my dance! Will you find out for me what has happened?”

“I will try,” replied the Chief Eunuch, “but many things happen at court, little flower, and in the Cold Palace, where the discarded ones go, there are many women with tearless eyes, who merely sit—and wait for death to come! Among them are women who were favorites before His Majesty ever so much as heard the name of Plum Blossom! But I will try to discover what has happened, and what troubles His Majesty!”

So the Chief Eunuch, manager-of-affairs, quitted the presence of Plum Blossom, and set about his “managing.” He never hurried, for to the philosopher there is plenty of time for everything, always.



Next day the blow struck.

A new favorite had been brought to the court of Ming Huang. There was a mild scandal attached to the matter, too, for the new favorite was already wife to a prince of the blood. But the Emperor was the Emperor, and what he desired was his. Other princes, however, heard and trembled, for it suddenly seemed to them that nothing was safe or sacred, and wives whom they had merely tolerated heretofore became suddenly precious!

Jade Circle came to court, as I say, and the blow fell. For to His Majesty, as he had told Prince Lao, she was the beginning and the end of all things. She was the woman of his dreams, his ideal. He saw in her eyes that his love was returned, wildly and impetuously—and jealously. She wasted little time, did Jade Circle, in making her position secure. She saw at once that whatever she desired was hers, because His Majesty, loving her to abject adoration, could deny her nothing.

So she told him her desire:

“Let there be no other women in the court of Your Majesty! Let them all be banished to the Cold Palace!”

That was the blow.

## THE SCARF OF PLUM BLOSSOM

No secondary wives, no concubines, for Jade Circle was every woman, and all women, to His Majesty.

Plum Blossom was heartbroken as the order came; but when the others went to the Cold Palace, where tearless women awaited death to release them from their memories, she went with them. She charged the Chief Eunuch, however, to remain friendly toward her, to visit her and tell her what happened daily at the court, and begged him never for a moment to give over trying to persuade His Majesty to return her to favor.

The Chief Eunuch promised. He always promised, and he kept his promises. He was a manager of affairs. He always arranged things, and he tried to please everyone. Friendly to all, a friend of none.

The days passed. Ming Huang was like a man beside himself with joy. In one instant he had forgotten Plum Blossom of the dancing feet, and he had forgotten, too, all the secondary wives and concubines who had gone before her. He never visited the women in the Cold Palace, and they were never allowed to visit him. All day and most of the night, every day and every night, there was music in the palace, where Ming Huang gave all his time to the wonderful, imperious Jade Circle. He held no audiences for his ministers, he refused to read memorials.

He was Jade Circle's, and she was his, and he had time for nothing else.

All over the Empire, as the days passed, and affairs of state were disregarded, the people murmured and protested; but no words of protest reached the ears of His Majesty, for he closed his ears and would not listen.

In the Cold Palace, to which came often the strains of soft music, muted and muffled by distance, Plum Blossom, living on her sorrows and her memories, danced alone. She danced the dance of the scarf, and grew every day more perfect in it. She still was Plum Blossom the glorious, though her face was sad, always. She pined by day and by night for Ming Huang. She had loved him madly. She still loved him, and day by day her love mounted.

The people murmured.

Some of the murmurs even reached the ears of Plum Blossom, for the Chief Eunuch was a faithful reporter of news.

"The people complain," he told her, "and one day they will demand either the life of Jade Circle, or the Empire of His Majesty! His Majesty cannot keep both forever, and neglect the one—for the one means the welfare of the Empire!"

"If only I might go to him, and warn him of the

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danger!" replied Plum Blossom. "This Jade Circle has bewitched him!"

"But that, of course," said the Chief Eunuch hastily, "is impossible! Women of the Cold Palace never visit His Majesty!"

"You could arrange it for me, could you not? You have great influence with him!"

"I could try, of course," replied the neuter dubiously.

He went away and pondered the matter, but he did not hurry.

Every day, however, he managed to whisper into the ear of His Majesty.

"Plum Blossom is pining away for love of Your Majesty! She prays by day and by night for just one more word with you!"

Impatiently Ming Huang would wave away these importunities. He had discarded Plum Blossom, and wished to forget her. But this the Chief Eunuch, secure in his position, never allowed him to do. For every day he whispered those words into the ears of His Majesty.

The fame of the Chief Eunuch was great in the court, and it was in his rôle of mediator that Jade Circle sent for him; sent for him imperiously, as though she had been Empress instead of concubine.

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"What is it you are always whispering into the ears of His Majesty?" she demanded. "I have caught the name of Plum Blossom a half score times! What is it she wishes?"

For a moment the Chief Eunuch pondered the matter. Then he told. It could do no harm, he felt, and Jade Circle was firm in the affections of Ming Huang. Certainly mere memories of Plum Blossom could mean no danger to the new favorite.

"He loved her madly?" persisted Jade Circle.

"When Jade Circle came to court," evaded the Chief Eunuch, "the sun and the moon were darkened in the eyes of His Majesty, and in their places he set the eyes of Jade Circle."

"But this Plum Blossom desires to speak with him?" she insisted.

"Yes; but of course it is impossible."

The fine eyes of Jade Circle narrowed thoughtfully. An idea was being born in her canny brain. Her birthday would be soon now, and His Majesty had arranged for a great banquet in her honor. It was to be on the seventh day of the seventh moon, and His Majesty had whispered to Jade Circle that after the banquet they would go alone into their chamber, and swear eternal fealty, one to the other—that they should never, all their lives, be separated, and that



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even in the after-life they would journey on to eternity together.

An idea was being born in the mind of Jade Circle. There might be a way to end once and for always the episode of Plum Blossom. Jade Circle's plan had to do with the dance of the unwinding scarf.

Ming Huang, too, was thinking and planning. The continual demands of Plum Blossom, sent through the Chief Eunuch, were annoying him, making him restless and ill at ease. Discarded wives and concubines were supposed to obliterate themselves until they died, when the obliteration became complete.

The people murmured. Ministers spoke to the Chief Eunuch, because His Majesty refused to hear their complaints in person.

"Jade Circle should be compelled to commit suicide, and thus save the Empire for His Majesty!" they said. "He ravishes his empire for her! His cavalry goes far and wide to get precious fruits for her, and they ride down the people ruthlessly. It should stop. You should try to arrange the matter!"

Because he always tried to arrange everything for everybody, the Chief Eunuch said he would see what he could do.

He saw Jade Circle again, and told her how the people murmured.

"They did not murmur when Plum Blossom was favorite!" she said furiously. "If she were not here there would be no murmuring! I believe she is behind the stories! It is all her fault. I have a plan to discredit her. If His Majesty will listen, and the story gets abroad, the people may change. Or, if Plum Blossom is discredited, His Majesty may make peace with his people; for it is Plum Blossom who is on his mind, preventing him from going about his duties!"

The Chief Eunuch had other ideas on the matter, but he said nothing. He was as willing to aid Jade Circle as anyone, and he, too, was planning.

"I will help you to discredit her," he told Jade Circle.

"I will arrange for you to see His Majesty for the last time," he told Plum Blossom.

"I have a plan whereby we may end forever the complaints of Plum Blossom," he whispered into the ears of His Majesty. "If only Your Majesty will grant her the last interview she prays for!"

To the murmuring ministers, who merely repeated the murmuring of the people, the Chief Eunuch made a certain half-promise.

"Wait!" he cautioned them. "In due time everything will be arranged."

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Then he went back to Jade Circle, and whispered again into her shell-like ears.

" . . . and if you could prove to His Majesty that you, too, can dance the dance of the unwinding scarf . . ." were his only audible words, and they seemed weighted with great importance.

Jade Circle smiled and thanked the manager of affairs.

The Chief Eunuch went to Plum Blossom.

"I have arranged all," he told her joyously. "You will have a last few words with His Majesty. But I fear it will be unpleasant. On the seventh day of the seventh moon he has a banquet for Jade Circle. You will go before them and dance, for the last time. I charge you, Plum Blossom, dance as you have never danced before, and who knows? Perhaps . . ."

And there he left it, while the heart of Plum Blossom almost suffocated her with joy. It would be humiliating to dance for His Majesty in the presence of Jade Circle, but she would at least be permitted to see him, and to dance for him. So she agreed.

The Chief Eunuch had arranged matters for Jade Circle, for Plum Blossom, for His Majesty—and had made a half promise to the ministers who repeated the dissatisfied murmurs of the people.

So he planned to keep all his promises, which would seem to be a great and difficult task.

He had told His Majesty, tentatively, of the murmuring of the ministers and of the people.

"Away with them!" His Majesty had cried. "I will turn over the Empire to my son, and go away to live in rags with Jade Circle before I will allow her to commit suicide! What do the ministers, and the people, know of love?"

"But they do not wish Your Majesty to abdicate," said the Chief Eunuch. "They only wish for Jade Circle to be eliminated!"

"It will never be!" said His Majesty. "Speak no more about it!"

Since he wished to please everyone, the Chief Eunuch said no more about the matter.

But he went cautiously, long after midnight, to a friend in Peking, a friend who dabbled in medicine, in science, and experimented with poisons. To this man he spoke guardedly, and after the third visit the friend nodded, though he was very much frightened.

"It will mean decapitation for me!" he objected.

"No one will ever know," the Chief Eunuch assured him, and a little vial of pale liquid changed hands, and the Chief Eunuch carried it away with him.

When the night of the banquet came, it was the

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Chief Eunuch himself who went to bring Plum Blossom. He brought her with all the pomp and ceremony which he had once accorded her, when she had been in high favor with His Majesty. Two eunuchs to carry her sedan chair, and he himself carried the gorgeous scarf which His Majesty, in the long ago, had given her.

Somewhere along the way he dropped the vial in a dark place, and when he dropped it, it was empty.

It was a proud moment, and a sad one, when Plum Blossom, trembling with eagerness, her dewy lips parted in the ecstasy of love, moved majestically into the presence of His Majesty, and Jade Circle, to dance.

As she danced, Jade Circle watched Ming Huang from beneath veiled lids.

She studied him carefully, reading his thoughts.

"He still loves Plum Blossom," she told herself. "But after tonight, when *I* have danced, he will forget her!"

The twinkling feet of Plum Blossom danced and skipped over the floor. The long scarf now wrapped tightly the supple form which had lost none of its suppleness or its grace. But the face of Plum Blossom was strangely pale, and as she danced it became paler still. Many minutes were required for the



dance, but as they passed, slower and slower became the movements of Plum Blossom. Ming Huang leaned forward, surprised, even startled, at the vast change which seemed to have taken place in Plum Blossom.

Why, he never had suspected that she was so awkward. The very least of his concubines of yesterday could have done better. As for Plum Blossom, she could not understand the sudden, all-encompassing weakness which seemed to have settled in her limbs—in all her body.

Lassitude as of death. She must hurry.

She fairly raced for the end, gasping. Jade Circle watched her in triumph. She had been afraid of the grace of Plum Blossom, for the abandon and beauty of her dance were famous at the court. Now, however, she was not brilliant, and Jade Circle knew that she herself could dance better and more gracefully.

The end of the dance, where the dancer fell to her knees and bowed forward on the floor of the palace, the unwound scarf fluttering down over her in folds and billows, like birds covering a babe with leaves. A gentle kowtow, the last Plum Blossom would make to her lord. A beautiful ending, which had in it a hint of tragedy, but so beautiful was it that Ming Huang

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half rose from his throne, as though he would step down and lift Plum Blossom to her feet.

Jade Circle saw, and forestalled him.

"Watch now the dancing of Jade Circle!" she cried. "For thy favorite, O Ming Huang, can also dance the dance of the scarf, and far more gracefully than Plum Blossom!"

Plum Blossom, face down on the floor before the throne, neither moved nor spoke. So perfect was the end of her dance that her half nude body did not even seem to move—as though even her breathing had been stilled.

As Jade Circle caught up the scarf Plum Blossom had dropped, Plum Blossom might have moved—a little. Afterward no one remembered, for it was only Ming Huang who saw it all.

Swiftly Jade Circle discarded her gown. Easily, for she had prepared for this—and during the dance the flowing veil must be the body's only covering. Jade Circle disliked to leave the person of Plum Blossom uncovered before His Majesty, so placed atop the still form of the dancer the gown she herself had discarded.

She wound the scarf about her own wonderful body. Still Plum Blossom did not move, and Ming Huang himself was moved to pity, and almost rose again. But

Jade Circle held all his attention as she swept into the dance, and he desisted. He could wait, then call in the Chief Eunuch, and have Plum Blossom returned to the Cold Palace.

But what dread thing was this?

The face of Jade Circle was becoming as pale as that of Plum Blossom had been. Her limbs moved slower and ever slower as the dance progressed. The cherry red of her lips began to fade. She almost stumbled, and her body seemed suddenly very old and leaden.

Terror showed on the face of His Majesty as he watched. He could not understand, but . . . ah, Jade Circle, after all, was merely trying to better the artistic, wonderful—though tragic—ending of Plum Blossom.

She, too, sank down, and the folds of the scarf covered her in billows.

For many minutes, while His Majesty watched, she remained there, beside Plum Blossom, and for those minutes the billowing folds of the long scarf covered, almost, the bodies of both the dancers.

The ending of the dance, in the manner of Jade Circle and Plum Blossom, had been a masterpiece.

But at last His Majesty started. He rose, stepped down between the prone and silent dancers. He

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touched them both, and the first he touched was Plum Blossom. A cry rose in his throat, but he stifled it as he turned to touch Jade Circle.

Then he screamed aloud, in fearful frenzy, for the Chief Eunuch.

The neuter came in swiftly.

His Majesty was almost choking with sorrow.

"Dead!" he managed. "Both dead!"

The Chief Eunuch seemed much startled. But he had his duty to do. The dead must be removed from the presence of the stricken Ming Huang. The Chief Eunuch himself gathered up the folds of the tragic scarf.

He smiled to himself. He had kept his promises to everyone.

In half an hour, his scientist friend had told him, the fumes from the liquid in the vial—the liquid with which the Chief Eunuch had filled the folds of the scarf—would vanish as though they had never been. But as he lifted the scarf, the Chief Eunuch managed to grasp it through the long sleeve of his gown, so that his bare hands did not touch the cloth.

For bare flesh to touch that scarf, before half an hour had passed, meant death.

The manager of affairs had kept all his promises.

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He had arranged things for everyone, even the ministers.

But one thing only he could not manage. He could not heal the broken heart of Ming Huang, who abdicated in favor of his son, and went alone into the Long Silence to rejoin his best beloved.





## SLAVES OF THE WHITE MOTH

CHI LIAO was almost as strong as a grown man, and she was fourteen years old today. Fierce rebellion surged within her as she heard the five o'clock whistle which called her, and hundreds of others like her, back to her slavery, the slavery to the crawling worms which made the cocoons that were turned into silk to cover the proud backs of women who had never in all their lives known what it was to work fourteen hours a day for twenty cents Mex—and the fourteen daily hours not the whole of it!

Chi Liao scarcely remembered her own people. She had a hazy recollection of a grimy woman with snaggle teeth and a tongue that was bitter as lye and never ceased its vituperation, and of an equally grimy man who earned a bare living by traveling in the early morning along the streets, and . . .



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But Chi Liao could never exactly understand that. It was too terrible, even as part of a life that was altogether terrible, though to do Chi Liao justice she did not realize that her life was terrible. She had known no other.

She had been betrothed at the age of eight to a boy of twelve, who was the son of a friend of her "night coolie" father, and in accordance with the custom, went immediately to the home of her betrothed, where her prospective mother-in-law ruled the roost. This personage, since it would still be some years before Chi Liao could become bride-in-fact of her son, immediately made her a slave of the moth, and forced her to bring home her daily earnings. Twenty cents Mex! Less than ten cents in American money, for fourteen hours of the most exacting labor.

Chi Liao was fourteen years old today. Something was to happen today, but Chi Liao hadn't the slightest idea what it was, and she had to be at her place of work long before her prospective husband was out of bed, so she would not learn of the great change in her life until she returned at night.

She took her food in the worn old basket. Her food was cold rice from the night before, cold tea in a cracked pot, and a few pickles.

She was on hand when the whistle blew. So were

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hundreds of others. There were old women, young women, pretty women, ugly women, women of every age and degree of dirtiness. But Chi Liao was accustomed to dirt, though she managed somehow to keep herself fairly clean. She didn't know why she went to the trouble, but she did.

It wasn't required by her job, for her master did not care how dirty she was, so long as her hands were clean. As if they could ever be dirty, when for fourteen hours a day she kept them in water so hot that it would have scalded any hands but those of the slaves of the moth.

Here the hundreds of women worked side by side. The cocoons of the silkworms were boiled in this building, and the steam from the boiling mingled with the sweat of a hundred unwashed bodies, so that the room was like a vast cauldron through whose haze appeared faces and more faces—faces flat and plump, regular and irregular, round and screened by straggly hair, a place of horror, and of death.

The cocoons were dumped into the vats from great baskets, and the baskets came from everywhere, baskets piled high with cocoons, white cocoons and yellow, and inside each one a worm whose life was to be taken in the vats. Chi Liao had been a slave of the white moth since she could remember. Only *these* worms

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were never destined to become moths. The worms destined to become moths, and to bring forth yet other worms, never came to this place, but Chi Liao knew all about them.

Many a time, out in the country, had she spent days at a time wrapped tightly in padded gowns that were like ovens about her body, with whole layers of cotton in between her gown and her body, and the layers of cotton filled with the worms not yet ready to eat of the mulberry leaves! Maybe the seasons were not exactly right. Perhaps when the worms were born from the eggs, the mulberry leaves were not yet at exactly the right stage for them to eat, and they had to be hatched. Human incubators! All rather terrible, and creepy, that business of serving the forthcoming moths as a human incubator; but then the cotton kept the worms from crawling, and at that age they did not crawl anyway.

Chi Liao knew it all. As she thought of it, and she thought of it always, she could distinctly hear the worms, after the examination against the light of the sun showed their bellies transparent, and therefore ready for their next step in life's mission, eating away at the mulberry leaves, gnawing audibly, like tiny mice, eating, nibbling. Quite audibly, and one could visualize their wriggling delightedly as they ate.

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Then, after a time, the little boxes prepared for them. Boxes with four corners, and a worm for each corner, where each wriggly individual could start building a cocoon. Always in a corner, where the worm could make the cocoon about himself. Then, after the worms had vanished entirely, and were inside their cocoons, the cocoons were taken out of the box corners, and sent in many baskets—oh, thousands of baskets, filled with thousands of thousands of cocoons, and coming from thousands of widely separated places—to the place where Chi Liao worked.

Here, in the boiling vats, in the midst of the steam of water and of sweat, began the wholesale slaughter. The baskets were emptied. The cocoons were dumped into the vats, and there was a living worm, either a white or a yellow one, in each cocoon. Thousands of cocoons dumped into hundreds of boiling vats, and the hands of women, and of girls, like Chi Liao, to stir them.

As the boiling water killed the worms, it also made the silk of the cocoon more pliable, so that skilled fingers could follow the fine strands and change the cocoons into long strands of silk for drying and weaving. Those same hands, which did not scald because they were immune, must dispose of the dead worms

which had been living before the heartless plunge into the vats.

Chi Liao . . .

Well, Chi Liao was different from her sister slaves of the moth, for there were worms in her head. That's what the others said, for she was always thinking! Thoughts nibbled inside her pretty little head like silkworms nibbling at mulberry leaves, almost audibly. And she said the strangest things, too, surprising things, such as slaves of the moth had never heard before.

She believed, for one thing, that the slaves should not be compelled to work from five o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock at night! Unbelievable sacrilege, and it would get Chi Liao into grave trouble some day! She also believed that the slaves should have more than twenty cents Mex a day for their labors, and that their masters should pay for the four-girl wheelbarrows which carried the tired girls home after working hours. More sacrilege! If the girls, four to a barrow, could not pay the two coppers for transportation, they could walk home! It was a matter of indifference to their masters.

Chi Liao was fourteen years old today, and it was a milepost in her career, though just at the moment, how was she to know that?



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Those thoughts of hers were nibbling, and she planned on putting her thoughts into deeds if ever the opportunity came.

But this morning, as on every morning since she had been four years old, she was on hand at the gate of the great building, when the whistle blew.

The mad scramble to get inside. Hundreds of women, carrying their baskets containing their lunch of cold rice, cold tea and a few pickles. Women in rags, padded gowns, barefooted and grimy—yet somehow they managed to smile, save only the old ones, who had been at this work for decades.

Then inside, side by side, waiting at tables near the boiling vats, women standing side by side. All evil-tempered and selfish, these women, fighting for the right to live. Over there was a woman who, after she went home at night, had to cook for a family of seven, do all the laundry, and be wife to a man who believed in a large family, and that a true father should be sire to many sons and daughters. For six years this woman had worked side by side with Chi Liao, and during that time she had been absent for exactly six days, during which six days she had given birth to six children, all girls. They, too, would be slaves of the moth, following in the footsteps of their mother. Each could earn twenty cents a day, or a dollar twenty for the six, and



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their father would not need to work unless he felt inclined to—which he wouldn't! Why work when there were children who could do it?

Chi Liao looked about her. Women packed thickly about the steaming vats where the water slew the worms, all chattering like magpies. Striding in and out among them the overseers, each carrying a stick that looked hard and dangerous, and was. These overseers were there for the purpose of stopping the daily fight.

Who would start it today?

As it happened, it was the old woman who had had six children since Chi Liao had started working at the place. It was plain to Chi Liao that this woman was to have another child, a daughter probably, and it must have been plain to the others round about, too. One woman, down the sweaty line, called to the woman who was with child.

"Another child, O Ugly One? Why don't you slay that lazy husband of yours, or seek a bed that's not so full of babies?"

From all over the place rose shrieks of laughter. The overseers called out sharply, trying to still the laughing tongues. For when the women laughed like this, a riot was imminent. Chi Liao tensed as the woman addressed raised her ugly head, and peered

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at the speaker through strands of straggly hair which fell over her dirt-grimed face.

"My husband?" she said tartly. "He is my husband, anyway! I have my babies honorably! I do not get them from the rice paddies, or from the sampans of Suchow Creek!"

The deadly insult, for it was a known fact that the woman who had spoken so biting and sarcastically had a daughter—but no husband! Many jests had been passed about her, and even one of the overseers was mentioned, because for three nights in succession he had kept the girl after working hours on some trivial excuse or other. But Chi Liao knew what was coming, even before it started. So did the others. So did the overseers, who immediately began to shout invective at the two quarreling ones, which only helped to precipitate the trouble.

For a moment the old woman glared at the young one. Then they stepped back from their places, faced right and left like soldiers preparing to go into action, then strode to face each other. From their lips dropped the vilest obscenities. This Chi Liao did not mind, for she was accustomed to vile language, but . . .

Then there was no time to think of "buts," for the two women were joined in combat, and throughout the

great room women were leaving their labors to join in. All screamed volubly, all shouted the vilest epithets, and none cared, really, what had started the fight, for any fight which kept them from working was a boon to women and girls who, for years, had not known the meaning of rest.

The two fought and clawed at each other. Their faces were instantly streaked with blood. The others were around them, and the fight was swiftly becoming general. Women shrieked and stormed. Their hair hung in their eyes, screening faces which were swiftly scored by fingernails. A mad hubbub, magpies shrieking for self-expression.

Chi Liao did not join in. This was one of the things which made those worms nibble in her brain, and think funny thoughts. There seemed no need of the fighting, yet when the women *did* fight, they should be treated more kindly by overseers. This fight would gain them nothing, save that they would work after seven o'clock to make up the time lost.

A mad scramble in the midst of the steam. Blood and rioting, and in and out among the snarling, battling women, dashed the overseers, their clubs coming down on bodies and heads with great force.

"Outside in the courtyard!" screamed someone

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whose shrill words sounded high above the bedlam's tumult.

Through the doors they crowded, fighting still. Many were trampled underfoot, including the woman with child, and many feet passed over her. But it was too much to hope that the baby, which would be born to this same slavery, might be fatally injured in the brawl.

By this time no one remembered who had started the fight, but to the perpetually evil-tempered it did not matter, so long as there *was* a fight. Only the overseers were exercised. The women were stripping one another, and rags were scattered from the tables all over the floor, and even out into the courtyard, and many of the women who fought were half nude, baring grimy torsoes filled with wrinkles which in turn were streaked with sweat and grime. Not a pretty sight, surely, for a girl of fourteen. But to Chi Liao it was nothing, much, for she had seen it all, many times before.

It wasn't the fight itself that bothered her, nor the bodies that were nude before the eyes of the overseers. For she herself, when the summer heat was too great to be borne, had more than once spent her fourteen hours beside the boiling vats with nothing on at all. Perhaps clownishly inclined overseers would slap her

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on the hips, or even pinch her, but she would pay no heed. The overseers, to her, were not men anyway.

No, it wasn't the display of nudity, for that was to be expected when the 'daily fight occurred. It was the actions of the overseers which set the worms to nibbling in the brain of Chi Liao. For even as the women fought, and fury robbed them of their wits, and even of their capacity to feel pain, the overseers would dash among them, wielding their sticks. Chi Liao, watching, would see great welts start on the hips, the breasts even, and the faces of the women who fought—and these would fight on, no matter though the sticks continued to rise and fall.

The end, of course, was inevitable, for the overseers always won, and the women would be hazed back to work, bloody from fingernail scratchings, black and blue from the weight of the overseers' sticks, to stand in line again, innocent of clothing, bathed in the vile steam from the vats, and mumbling incoherently. New problems for the nude ones—the finding of clothing in which they could go home. It wasn't a problem of the overseers. Their problem was only to keep the women busy, working with the silk, which would one day cover the backs of women who would not have allowed one of these women or girls to so much as stand on the porch of their servants' quarters!

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The thwack-thwack of the sticks of the overseers rang always in the ears of Chi Liao. She knew something of child-birth, for she had seen children born, right here in the reek and sweat, with overseers standing over the mothers, commanding them in filthy language to hurry, and get back to their vats.

"I will never have a child to serve the white moths!" Chi Liao often told herself. "Never! Never! Never! And when I am big enough I will try to see if there isn't some way to punish overseers who beat women, some way to keep little children out of this steam and awful smell!"

Chi Liao knew, dimly, that she was betrothed to someone in the house where she slept, someone related to the old woman who took Chi Liao's earnings, and beat her unmercifully if she spent copper *cash* for wheelbarrow transportation home.

Funny, those wheelbarrows, squeaky and awful sounding because of ungreased axles. Wheelbarrows made to hold four women, and pushed by one sweating coolie with a harness over his shoulders. Four women, each paying two coppers—less than a cent in American money—to be carried home. Women who would spend these two coppers were the aristocrats among the slaves, and Chi Liao had always walked home, though her home was nine *li*—three miles—



distant. She had watched the more fortunate ones, who rode, two on a side in the wheelbarrow, laughing and talking as though they were enjoying a picnic, though Chi Liao hadn't the slightest idea what a picnic was.

"I wish," she once told the old woman who had started the fight today, "that I could afford to ride home! Sometimes I am so tired I can scarcely drag one foot after the other! But I dare not spend the coppers. I would be beaten!"

The old woman had tossed her straggly hair out of her eyes and gazed balefully down into the work-flushed face of Chi Liao. She had studied the girl for a moment, while her old wrinkled mouth had opened in a snaggle-toothed grin—and Chi Liao had known that something terrible was to be said.

"Why spend the coppers, and take a beating?" she had demanded. "Keep the coppers to turn over to your mother-in-law-to-be, and have your ride home anyway!"

"But how?" Chi Liao had asked.

"Merely whisper to the coolie who pushes the barrow, and let him take you home last of the four. When there are only you and the coolie . . . well, he would not insist on his copper *cash*, if you whispered the proper words!"

## SLAVES OF THE WHITE MOTH

Chi Liao hadn't felt insulted, nor even shocked. She had heard things like this before. But she resolved that if she ever were the mother of girl children, such children would never work side by side with old hags like this who gave such evil counsel to girls who were only fourteen—and when Chi Liao had heard this she hadn't been fourteen at all!

Now today, when Chi Liao was fourteen, she knew one thing: that no children of hers would ever be slaves of the white moth. She didn't know how it would be prevented, for while she knew much about many things no child of fourteen should ever hear about, she knew next to nothing about herself, or her status in the family where the old lady took her earnings, and beat her if there were any coppers missing.

She merely hoped that no children of hers would ever be slaves of the moth, and hoped that her hopes might make the dream possible. She knew better than to say anything about this to anyone, for if she did, and the overseers were told, she would be beaten. The overseers would then get word to her home, and she would be beaten again.

But on this day after the overseers had beaten the women back to their tasks—and then profusely, and with many smiles, were apologizing to the nude women who were prettiest, and standing ingratiatingly

close to them—the worms were nibbling almost audibly in the brain of Chi Liao.

She reviewed all she could remember of her past life, and discovered amazingly that she was a lot like the worms she served. They were born to slave and die that pretty women might have silk; she was born to slave and die for the same reason. Worm “goddesses,” like queen bees—though she knew nothing of queen bees, and much about “goddesses”—became the heads of new worm families which must also slave and die, while women and girls must bring forth other girls who would become women, and slave, and die—to cover vain women with the glistening silk.

Fierce revolt was growing in the heart of Chi Liao; but when the seven o'clock whistle had blown, and after the women had worked out the hour they had lost fighting—for no extra pay, of course—she still was undecided what to do.

But the rebellion took a strange form, as she remembered what the old woman had once told her. The vast crowd of women poured from the great steamy building. Countless wheelbarrows, with seats for four, were drawn up before the building, and the coolies were jabbering and cajoling prospective fares. Fiercely Chi Liao clutched her wages in a water-scalded hand. If she gave up the necessary two “clackers,”

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she would be beaten. Yet for this one night, she would ride home in state.

And maybe, as the old lady had said, she could save the two coppers, after all.

But when the other three who rode with her had been dropped at their homes, and she was being trundled alone toward her own squalid home by the coolie, to the accompaniment of the squeaking of ungreased axles, she found she did not know what to whisper into his ears. Besides, he was dirty, and sweat dripped from his body in a steady stream.

They were passing through the shadows cast over the trail by rows of trees, when Chi Liao spoke to the coolie.

"I cannot afford to spend two coppers for the ride," she choked, "but I was told that if I whispered . . ."

The coolie grinned and dropped his harness. His grimy hands were extended toward her. The creaking of the wheelbarrow was stilled, and horror flooded over Chi Liao like a miasmatic mist from a molding rice paddy filled with snakes.

Forgetting how tired she was, she ran from him as from a woman-eating dragon. He called after her and she paused, then threw two coppers in his direction in the darkness, nor did she wait to discover if he found them.

But, strangely enough, her mother-in-law-to-be did not scold her or beat her when she found the two coppers missing. She smiled and showed her snaggle teeth. The old man of the house grinned at her, a ghastly leer. The son, eighteen years of age, grinned at her, too, and his cheeks were flushed with excitement.

"You are fourteen years old today!" they told her.

Her eyes grew wider, but the statement meant nothing to her. As far as she knew this day was no different from others. She was older, that was all, and tomorrow she must go back to her slavery.

But that night she was wakened from her deathlike slumber as the son came into her chamber, softly, easily, silently, like a cat. She had no coppers to give *him*, and it wouldn't have mattered if she had had a barrowful.

Years later Chi Liao told me some of her story when, because an old friend of mine asked it, I agreed to receive her. I had heard whispers about her morals that worried me, and made me wonder what people would think if I received her. But receive her I did. She was dressed in the foreign fashion, and she was drab and shabby and flat-breasted. She did not know how to





She was being trundled alone toward her own squalid  
home by the coolie





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wear foreign clothing, and nothing fitted her properly, and her clothes did not match.

She told me that she was fighting for shorter hours for girls and women in the silk factories; for more pay for them; for the organization of a union that would protect the girls and women from the clubs of overseers; for anything that would make easier the inevitable lot of the slaves of the white moth.

"But what good will it do?" I asked her. "These people are like animals. They are happy as they are, and they won't appreciate your efforts."

I confess I could not see the light where the efforts of this woman were concerned. She was a woman of no morals. Besides, I held the belief that only the highborn could have ideals, and could really think thoughts that were worth while.

Chi Liao smiled a tired smile at me.

"But I must keep on trying, don't you see?" she demanded defiantly. "A woman in your position can help me, at least with good advice!"

"But what do you care about these people?" I insisted. "You no longer slave in the silk factories yourself, and, if all I hear about you is true, you have found a way of living that does not cause so much hardship—though there is always the shame!"

"Shame?" she replied. "That is nothing. Like the moths, I was born to slave, and die! Shame cannot touch me, and what matters it what I do, so long as I succeed in what I am trying to do?"

"The executioner's sword has been sharpened for you, because they say you are a menace to the silk trade . . ." I began.

But she stopped me.

"Come with me to Hangchow and Shanghai," she said in a hard voice, "and I will show you—many things! Chief among them, four daughters! They have disowned me, and my family has disowned me, and three of my daughters are betrothed, as I was. Don't you see that I must go on!"

I went, and I saw.

The old-fashioned Chinese gentleman who had insisted that I receive Chi Liao into my home for a talk, had merely told me:

"She isn't your *kind*, nor your class, but you will find her interesting."

I saw her daughters, too. The oldest of the four, in the big building in Shanghai, had been stripped of her clothing in a fight that had been quelled just prior to our arrival. As we entered Chi Liao pointed her out to me.

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An overseer, stick in hand, was trying to calm her, and his grimy free hand stroked her firm brown breast as though she had been an animal that could be calmed by petting.





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WHEN I think of Isadora Duncan, and my memory goes tripping back down the long corridors of the years, the first flash is not of Isadora herself, the American-born artist whose greatest success was made away from the country of her birth; not of her early struggles as a teacher . . . those Paris days which I knew so well; not of her rise to fame and fortune when the whole world acclaimed her the supreme disciple of self-expression in the dance and in life; not of her spectacular love affairs and marriage to the young Russian poet; not even of her tragic death a short time ago. Memory brings first to me always a picture of something which led up to my meeting with the great dancer.

A Parisian stage, and a figure more a butterfly or a moth than a woman. A vivid creature out of a fairy dream, revolving with silent wings which changed



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color gloriously, as the lights flashed on and off, or merely merged one with the other until it was impossible to be sure when one color faded and the other appeared. The woman danced a dance then new to me, and just a little breath-taking. Airy vesture garbing a diminutive dancer, covering her completely save for a face like a cameo, set in the midst of the creation. She was dancing a butterfly dance, or a dance in which the final figure looked like a huge moth.

The dance is common now; then it was an innovation. A swirling of gauzy draperies, while the lights faded and changed. A moth with fluttering wings, helpless in a candle's flame. A butterfly that could only beat its wings but could not rise.

Then the final figure, the woman stationary, the wings outspread, the moth impaled, held hypnotized there in the gleam of the lights.

The dancer was Loie Fuller, whom all Paris knew.

That, for me, spells the beginning; and meeting Isadora Duncan is always, in some strange way, mixed up with the butterfly dancer, Loie Fuller. Just why, I do not know, but this is always the thing of which I first think when the incomparable Isadora comes back to memory.

I was among the very first of her pupils, and this is the way it happened:

## LOTOS PETALS

There was a party of some kind. I don't recall exactly what. But then, in Paris, there were always parties, soirées and receptions, and the legation folk always attended. My sister and I were allowed to attend these things, because Father was a modernist and did not believe in keeping his girl children so carefully guarded as we later were in China, and as we had been before my father became Chinese Minister to France.

We attended this particular party with my mother, the Lady Yu Keng, who was already much interested in Isadora Duncan.

"I wish you to meet her. She is altogether lovely," my mother told my sister and me.

So, for the first time, I met the dancer who was to become world-famous . . . Isadora Duncan, the creator. I confess I was not much impressed, but then I was never much impressed with anyone at that age. Now that I look back, and discover how many people who did not impress me then have become famous, I can understand that there were many golden opportunities I must have missed.

But I did not miss Isadora Duncan, a fact of which I am now a little proud . . . more than a little. For I was her pupil for almost three years.

My sister and I were presented to Isadora and her

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mother. The latter was a little dumpy woman, who impressed me even less than did her to-be-illustrious daughter. Whenever we met she insisted on kissing my sister and me . . . a rite neither of us enjoyed and would have tried to avoid had it been possible.

"Mademoiselle Duncan," said my mother, "I wish my daughters to learn to dance as you dance."

Isadora Duncan made a slight gesture with her shapely hands.

"It is really nothing; but I should be glad to instruct them. I have a studio, you know, and I am forming a class. If you do not wish them to join the regular class, I can give them private lessons."

Mother was very much pleased, for she had taken a great fancy to this then obscure dancer. As I say, I was not greatly interested. For I had seen other, more colorful dancers who had impressed me as being all I thought dancers should be. A Mademoiselle Otero, a Spanish dancer, and a Mademoiselle Deval, French. *They* were my idea of dancers. They sported fine carriages, wonderful horses, and dressed to their rôles. Often they rode through the Bois, the cynosure of all eyes, stared at and admired by the crowds. They had footmen and valets and maids. Very impressive.

But not so Isadora. When I first saw her she was dressed all in black. A black, plain, tailor-made

suit . . . too plain, somehow suggesting poverty or mediocrity. You see, as a child, I could not see the real people behind the trappings. Lack of experience. Not, you understand, that there was really anything wrong with the Oteros and Devals of the day. Isadora Duncan . . . I still can see her as she appeared that first time, and one portion of her dress remains with me more plainly than any other, except the fact that the effect was black, like mourning.

She wore a high white lace collar, one of those boned instruments of torture, and about it were three very narrow bands of black ribbon, with the white of the lace showing between the bands and with the bands meeting in tiny, rhinestone-adorned bows, one above the other, on the left side. Neither then, nor at any later time did she appear a significant figure in ordinary dress, and one did not realize the striking handsomeness of her features or the glorious beauty of her body until, freed from conventional apparel, she donned the classic robes of the dance.

"I do not *live* in ordinary dress," I once heard her say. "I cover my body because the law demands it." Then with a contemptuous shrug the everlasting rebel in her spoke: "Silly, the law!"

Because Mother wished it, my sister and I were enrolled with her as pupils, in a private class. There

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were four of us, the other two young girls being Americans. These dropped out before long, but my sister and I kept on.

The first view of her studio. A barn-like place; the stage at the end of it seemed very bare and large. I wondered about the steps leading up to it, and why they were used. I had seen many stages, but never stages with steps arranged like this . . . a stairway leading straight up to the rostrum.

"I don't understand the meaning of the stairs," I said questioningly to our instructor.

She smiled.

"Did you ever notice," she said, "how few women are capable of mounting steps gracefully? That is one of the things you will learn."

"When are we to begin dancing? and how soon shall we be good dancers, like you?"

Again that smile.

"It will require hard study, and plenty of work, for at least a year, to soften your bodies, before you can even think of really dancing!"

How discouraging that sounded! We wished, I fancy, to go in, take a lesson or two, emerge from our cocoons of awkwardness, and come out in an hour or so as full-blown butterflies . . . like Loie Fuller.

I had heard somewhere that Isadora Duncan had

been a pupil of Loie Fuller. Even today I do not know whether she ever was a pupil of Fuller, although I asked her. Of course I did not ask the bald question, for something warned me of the easily hurt feelings of artists. So I put it this way:

"You know, I think the dance of Loie Fuller is altogether lovely. Why do you not dance that way?"

"I do not like it," she said quickly. "It is not my kind of dance. Besides, I will never imitate the work of others. I will always create, as an artist should."

Isadora Duncan was one of the most painstaking women I have ever encountered. When I first went to her she had very few pupils, and I suspected that her means were not large. Lessons, as I recall it, cost five dollars each. She was not in need, exactly, but she was not, at that time, making more than a moderate income. But to go on . . .

She studied my sister and me as a scientist studies the antics of newly discovered creatures. I was not a very large child . . . was in fact rather short, but fancied myself quite good-looking. Isadora Duncan showed my sister and me some of her Greek interpretations, and of course the ones I wished to learn were absolutely unsuited to me.

"No," said Miss Duncan, "that won't do for you! Most decidedly not! That one is for a slender girl



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several inches taller than you. You will be better as a piper, as Pan perhaps. You'll come in with your head thrown back and your black hair blowing every which way, or tossed in all directions by your pixy-ish movement . . . and you will be playing on two reeds . . ."

How it all comes back. The four of us, trying our best to do as we were bidden. A whole year to make our bodies supple! We had always fancied that our bodies were full of grace and very flexible. We learned almost at once that we really were stiff as ironing boards. Here I find it difficult not to go into rhapsodies over the glorious body of Duncan. . . . I can see her now . . . the lids lowered over her beautiful moody eyes, and the long, slim suppleness of her limbs—perfect medium for the expression of her creative fire.

She was right. We must learn absolute control of our bodies, and we started learning by music . . . each and every movement. Isadora's mother played the piano; Isadora directed us.

"Thump! Thump! Thumpety-thump!"

After an hour and a half of it—we went to Miss Duncan three times a week—our heads fairly buzzed with that endless "thumpety-thump." That little black-clad figure, stumpy and persevering, hunched

over the keys, pounding off the tempo for four as awkward pupils as I fancy Duncan ever had. Hour after hour . . .

This, of course, was before the Duncan became famous, though she was even then making some appearances about Paris, usually at private homes. All Paris took her up shortly after this, and I can recall the first important story about her in the newspapers, the story that really started her up the ladder to imperishable fame.

If ever a person worked for success, Isadora Duncan was that person.

"Thump! Thump! Thumpety-thump!"

About this time Isadora was scheduled to give an interpretation somewhere, on the stage I believe, and she enthralled my sister and me by showing us the dance she was going to use, and in the costume she had devised. Bare feet, sleeveless white gown that draped her completely. Underneath she wore flesh-colored tights, and the gown itself was almost transparent, so that the matchless grace of her movements could plainly be seen. Two or three times she went through the dance, and to me it was marvelous that her interpretation of the music did not vary by a hair's breadth from one time to the next.

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"How do you always get it just the same?" I asked her.

"I could not vary it, child," she replied. "Dancing is my life. My soul goes with the music and I *have* to create as I do."

How I remember the criticism that was hurled at Mother when the society leaders of Paris discovered that my sister and I were being tutored by Isadora Duncan! They raised their bejeweled hands in horror.

"You should never let those innocent children go to such a shameless creature! She wears a white robe that you can see through, and skin-tight clothing underneath that might as well not be clothing at all!"

This attitude is understandable when one remembers that this was in late 1900 or early 1901! I have forgotten the exact date. My mother was polite to her critics, but she did not take us away from the influence of Isadora Duncan. Back in China she might have done so, and perhaps she let us go on because she knew that soon we would be shut off from most things that European girls enjoy. We would be hedged about by all sorts of conventions when we returned to China. So Mother sided with us and we continued our studies.

That I might some day dress in flowing white over

tights, I had not the slightest idea; but the day was to come . . . another story!

When the two American girls, for some reason or other, dropped out of the class, Isadora Duncan relaxed more with us, and gave us a more intimate glimpse of the dancer the world was later to know.

Her classes were growing by leaps and bounds. Isadora Duncan did the very best she knew for each individual pupil, and her work was strenuous. She created dances for her pupils, building the dance around the individual. She was a mistress of dance-creation, and she herself realized it long before the public did. She marched on to her destiny with the calm surety of a mistress of fate.

Many times she would permit my sister and me to come and look on while she drilled her regular classes. After a time so many pupils clamored for lessons that she had to divide them up into three classes, tripling her labors, which were already beyond the capabilities of anyone else I could have named. That patient mother of hers, who endlessly thumped the piano! I might have appreciated her martyrdom more, if only she hadn't always insisted on kissing when we met!

The class would be lined up like soldiers. Isadora would tell them carefully, almost spelling out her lesson, exactly what to do, and just where each move-

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ment fitted in with the music. The mother would begin playing, the class would start the lesson.

Ambitious girls, all eager to become what Isadora Duncan later became! Fat girls, thin girls, tall girls, stubby girls; girls with knees, girls with calves, girls with neither knees nor calves! It seemed to me, watching, that not one of them did correctly anything that Isadora told them, and that no two of them did the same thing. It must have seemed that way to Duncan, too, for the very first movement she would say:

“Stop!”

The piano would pause in the midst of a snarling note. Isadora's command would catch the girls in all sorts of awkward positions, from which they would fall, scramble and stagger to normal. Patiently, Isadora would explain to each one exactly wherein she had erred, and then the music would begin again. To me it seemed that they did even worse than before. Not at all as well as *I* could have done! I have often wondered how Duncan compared me with those others, and I am just a little glad she never told me!

Her classes were divided into three sections, each one working for an hour and a half, three days a week. Isadora working her heart out with every one of those pupils, giving them more than their money's

worth, and more instruction than most would ever have gumption to use . . . keeping up her own personal work meanwhile! No, the climb to stardom was no rose-strewn pathway for Isadora Duncan. But she was at last making money—though earning far more than she received—and money she needed to perfect herself. Even after she began to acquire fame, she held classes for would-be dancers, because, to her, interpretive dancing was a fetish to which she gave her soul, her very heart's blood.

These words from her about posing:

"While you are dancing, if you make slight errors, no one except other dancers will notice, because successive movements hide the mistakes too swiftly for any but the expert to see. But when you are posing, and swinging gradually from one pose to the other, you must fall instantly into the exact pose. The arms must be exactly so, the curve of hips and limbs exactly so, the expression of the face, the curve of the neck, the position of the head, the whole posture . . . exactly so. If you miss you can't correct, for to correct is noticeable, spoiling the whole effect. So to pose beautifully means to practice, practice . . . until the head aches and the heart aches, and even the soul perspires with the endless effort. For a single awkward



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posture is . . . monstrous. Even the people in the last row can see *that!*"

She spared no effort or expense to bring this point home to us. To make the lesson unforgettable, she often took us to the Louvre to study the sculptured works of the masters, and every important detail she explained to us, over and over again, seemingly without end. She meant for us to *know!*

How that recalls the drilling! The same movements until one was almost ready to fall from exhaustion. Over and over again. That little hunched up woman at the piano: "Thump! Thump! Thumpety-thump!"

"No, no! That isn't the way! This is the way! This is the way! Begin again!"

A thousand beginnings, all wrong, until finally we caught the right one, which we probably forgot again when the next day came, but gradually, through labor and heartache, mastering the little things that led, in their sum total, to mastery of ourselves.

I remember so vividly going with Isadora Duncan once to Versailles and pausing at the beautiful Temple of Love to admire the lovely statues.

"I wish you were up there," I said to Isadora, indicating one of the pedestals . . . and indeed, it seemed

to me that none of the beautiful sculptured bodies was more perfect than hers.

"I'd like to have their fashions generally adopted," replied Isadora, adding with a wry smile, "You know how I feel about clumsy conventional clothes!"

Of course the people of Paris, especially the elderly ones who did not approve of Isadora Duncan as she came more into the limelight—eccentric, free and fearless—had a great deal of criticism to offer about everything she did. I recall especially that there was an American artist named Joe Smith, who danced attendance upon her. Gossip reported that they carried on scandalously together. However this may be, I merely wish to offer a bit of evidence that would seem to indicate the contrary.

Mother had an old-fashioned Christmas dinner, to which she invited Miss Duncan and Joe Smith, together with a great number of other people. Of this gala gathering I remember several things . . . the roast turkey with cranberry sauce, the thick mince pie, the preserves and all the eatables American people enjoy at the holiday season . . . *and* Joe Smith and Isadora Duncan. I had heard whispers about them, and I admit that I was an impertinent youngster, as will soon appear. Mr. Smith was very attentive to Miss Duncan, but she didn't look at him if she could

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possibly avoid it, which puzzled me no less than it seemed to puzzle Mr. Smith.

One thing I remember above all about Joe Smith. He fancied himself immensely as a singer, and he sat down at the piano whenever he thought of it, which was repeatedly during the evening, and played his own accompaniment to "Swanee River." It must have been the only song he knew, for he sang it so many times, in spite of polite protests, that finally we all had to leave the room to escape his sobbing voice.

This gave me my chance to ask Miss Duncan about the singer.

"You don't seem to like Mr. Smith," I said. "That's funny! I've heard . . ."

"Yes, I know what you've heard," she interrupted me, "and it isn't true. I dislike American men, and above all do I dislike Joe Smith. He is completely and entirely uninteresting, and if he sings 'Swanee River' again I shall surely murder him!"

If Joe Smith did not hear her, it was not the fault of Miss Duncan. I know, however, that by actual count he sang "Swanee River" four more times after Miss Duncan's threat!

In spite of Isadora's frankly expressed dislike of American men, it was the Americans in Paris who were largely responsible for her rise to giddy heights. I

recall one of President Loubet's receptions—one of those curious affairs where the audience hall was divided by the famous red cordon, separating the distinguished guests on the one side from the undistinguished hordes of the republic on the other!—at which Isadora danced and where the ovation she received was a tremendous and touching tribute to her genius.

And then there was a fancy dress ball given at the American Embassy. I wheedled permission from Mother to accompany Father and her to the ball, for Isadora was to be there. By this time she was becoming quite famous, and I liked people to know that I knew her! At this particular time there was a certain count—who must remain nameless because he is still living—who was conspicuously devoted to the adorable Isadora.

Isadora came to the ball dressed as Cleopatra, and people gasped when she appeared. She had dressed *à l'égyptienne* to the last detail, and words of mine are inadequate to express the stunning effect she made, toying with a shiny little dagger which looked exceedingly dangerous. Isadora looked willing and eager to use it, if the expression on her face—dictated by her rôle—meant anything. She was wonderful. I thought so. So did Count X.

Before all those people he marched out to Isadora

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kissed her hand with a grandiloquent gesture, and cried aloud so that everyone could hear:

"Marvelous! Wonderful! You are gorgeous beyond words! But you must create for us a dance that will fit your costume, and you!"

Isadora started to draw back from him, but his suggestion remained in her mind, and it apparently struck her as a good one, for above all things she was a creator.

She nodded and smiled.

"Tell the orchestra to play Mozart's 'Turkish March'!"

The orchestra struck up the march, and there before us all Isadora Duncan danced in a way that will stay in my memory to the grave. She *was* Cleopatra . . . the siren that bewitched Cæsar and Mark Antony, the Cleopatra of the poisons and the asp. The dagger of hers was as much a part of her dance as was the rest of her costume, and the way she gestured with it kept cold chills racing up and down my spine.

When she finished there was complete silence for what seemed a breathless age. Then Count X raced across the floor to her, the tears were literally streaming down his cheeks for everyone to see. He wept as unashamedly as a child. He caught the hands of Isa-

dora Duncan in his, covering them with his kisses and his tears.

To climax his display of approval—he had cried, “Bravo! Bravo!” to break the spellbound silence—he dropped to his knees before Duncan and kissed her feet. I do not think anyone there doubted that the count was fond of Isadora.

But how did she feel about it? I’ll tell you. Two different times when I was at class with Isadora Duncan, the count either came to call or his name was mentioned. Once he appeared when Isadora was having her big class. Then duennas and mothers were with the girls, and these people, naturally old-fashioned, protested mightily when the count came to see Isadora, and was allowed to watch her pupils. Since those pupils were dressed in what might have been called abbreviated nightgowns, yet which today would be cumbersome, the lady guardians were scandalized, and protested loudly and at great length.

“But what is wrong?” wailed Miss Duncan. “He doesn’t come to watch the girls, but to have a word with me, and I am too busy to stop work to talk with him! The girls are fully clothed!”

But of course that did not satisfy the old-fashioned ones, and Miss Duncan had to ask the count to leave.

Sometime later I was with Miss Duncan, in her



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studio, when a messenger came with a big box of roses. Rather absently she signed for them, and the messenger boy had departed when she opened the box. What gorgeous flowers! Exquisite!

Isadora looked at the name on the card, that of Count X, and she was suddenly and insanely furious.

"Why can't he stop bothering me? Why must he send me flowers when he surely knows I don't care for his attentions?"

"But don't you like the count?"

"Oh, he's all right, I suppose. But I know him! I know exactly what he is thinking! Isadora Duncan's future is assured. Count X is sure of that, as is everyone else, including Isadora Duncan! Soon I shall make a great deal of money and the man who marries me will not need to work. Listen to me, child! Do you know what these roses mean? I'll tell you. When a man sends a lady roses every day, it means, in France, that his intentions are serious, and that he intends to make a proposal. French lovers are prodigal with flowers at such times . . . for it is a custom for the bride, after the marriage, to pay for them! He sends me lovely roses, the highest priced he can find, and he probably doesn't even ask the price . . . and if I marry him I'll have to pay for the flowers!"

Miss Duncan then went to the window, on the second story, as I remember, and tossed the flowers, card and all, outside.

The janitor found the box, with Miss Duncan's name on it, and the well meaning old fellow brought the flowers back to her . . . watching in astonishment as they made another flight, far faster and more furious than the first one, out the window again. The dismay of the janitor was so ludicrous that I laughed, and clear skies were again the order of the day when Miss Duncan saw the joke and laughed with me. But I doubt if the janitor ever saw anything humorous in the situation.

One of my youthful dreams was to study ballet dancing, but Madame Bernhardt had dissuaded me from this, telling me that study with Duncan was far more valuable. I could be persuaded to do anything then, and dissuaded from it just as easily . . . a straw in the wind.

I did not know then that I was soon returning to China to become first Lady-in-Waiting to Her Majesty Tzu Hsi, Empress Dowager of China, and that one day I should dance for Her Majesty a dance Isadora Duncan had taught me. Only Mother, when she heard I was to dance, insisted that my costume have plenty of lining, so that it would not be *too* transpar-

## ISADORA THE INCOMPARABLE

ent. The Empress Dowager hated everything "foreign," and "foreigners" were all her life the bane of her existence.

But she thought the dance I learned of Isadora Duncan was beautiful. I told Her Majesty about Isadora, and of how much I liked her. She listened with interest and said:

"I should like very much to see her. I wonder if you could persuade her to come to China. I hope she hasn't any hair on her upper lip, like all other foreign ladies!"

But to go back to Paris . . . Isadora Duncan was famous and was making many public appearances by the time we gave up our studies with her. We gloried in her fame which we somehow felt cast its aura of sunshine about even *us*. We were pupils of hers! Even then it was something. Now the thought is somehow touched with tragedy.

Because those three years, while of infinite value, mostly because they made known Isadora Duncan to my sister and me, were not turned to account as they should have been. After all, Mother had us go merely because it was her desire that her daughters be graceful. If *we* had ideas about becoming ballet dancers, Mother did not . . . most decidedly not!

## LOTOS PETALS

And Mother's ideas were eventually our ideas;  
Mother was forceful that way!

So . . .

We went back to China and lost Isadora . . . and  
though we gained fame of a sort we had never  
dreamed of attaining, well . . .

Isn't it odd that the things that might have been  
seem to us, in later years, the things that would have  
mattered most?





## HER MAJESTY'S JEWELS

It was commonly believed during my time at the Manchu court, as first Lady-in-Waiting to Her Majesty Tzu Hsi—1903 to 1905—that she owned the greatest collection of precious stones in existence. Queen Victoria was said to have a valuable collection, and the Czarina's was better than that of Queen Victoria, while Her Majesty Tzu Hsi's was greater than that of either, or both together. This statement may be difficult to comprehend, until one explains exactly why this was so.

Her Majesty ruled China for almost half a century, and each year the viceroys of the provinces sent experts far and wide to procure the most precious things for Her Majesty. I shall take up the various pieces as they come to memory after the lapse of years, and will explain at once that I personally knew each piece

mentioned here, and that for a time I was their custodian, and often kept the accounts myself, or checked the accounts kept by the eunuchs assigned to duty in the treasure house.

First, there was the famous "eggplant pearl," whose size was about that of a small hen's egg. This was a drop-pearl, as may be readily deduced from the name given it, as it was shaped almost exactly like an eggplant. The skin of this pearl was perfect, and its luster unsurpassed anywhere. Her Majesty wore it as a pendant, fastened into the right side of her gown, just below the shoulder.

This pearl came from Canton, and was presented by the viceroy of Canton to His Majesty Hsien Feng, shortly after Tzu Hsi, then called Lan Kuei—"The Orchid"—became Secondary Wife to His Majesty. His Majesty, despite the fact that Lan Kuei was only a Secondary Wife at the time, caused a great uproar at court by presenting this pearl to Lan Kuei. Then, of course, she was a young girl. When I knew Her Majesty she was almost seventy, but this pearl was one of her most prized possessions, which she wore at every opportunity. I saw this pearl many times, and while I cannot of course prove it, will state that it was the only one of its kind and size in existence as far as was known. This, by the way, was a



## HER MAJESTY'S JEWELS

requirement of everything of great value given to Her Majesty—it must be the only one of its kind.

Her Majesty's greatest love was for her pearls. In this connection I must mention a certain dinner given to the Secondary Wife, which of course was before my time, but was repeated to me by no less a personage than Her Majesty. His Majesty Hsien Feng gave the dinner to the most famous ministers, in honor of Lan Kuei, whose name was soon to become Tzu Hsi. The dinner was a grand affair, full of color and loveliness. Lan Kuei herself was a woman of unsurpassed loveliness. The Tzu Hsi I knew was beautiful, despite her age. Just before the dinner was finished, His Majesty informed his guests that he had a surprise for everyone, including the Secondary Wife. Eunuchs, at His Majesty's command, brought in a huge peach, almost as large as the torso of a man.

The peach was placed before Lan Kuei, who held a place of honor at the board not usually accorded a mere Secondary Wife, and the halves were parted. Inside the peach, on a bed of yellow satin, rested a gorgeous pair of shoes for the Secondary Wife. Set in each of the shoes were five hundred pearls, perfectly matched! It was a beautiful gift, and Her Majesty never tired of telling how the shoes were presented. The shoes, of course, wore out in time, but the pearls

were immediately, each time, set in new shoes, in a way to commemorate the gift of His Majesty, Hsien Feng.

Her Majesty possessed two gowns which were somewhat alike, but only superficially, and each will be treated in turn. Fortunately I have a picture of Her Majesty in one of these gowns, and this picture was taken by my brother. The gown was decorated with thirty-five hundred pearls, all perfectly matched. There is no way of telling, though one may guess to one's heart's content, how much time and labor went into securing this great number of evenly matched pearls—each of which was the size of a canary egg. This gown was set with pearls in fillet fashion, or criss-cross patterns across the breast, coming down from each shoulder, and at the base of the fillet pattern there were twenty-four pendants, of pearls of the same size.

These pendants were strung on silver wire, and were very flexible. Her Majesty favored gold usually but gold was not quite durable enough for this purpose, and silver was necessary.

The other gown was set with pearls, alternating with bits of jade, the two worked into numbers of intricate patterns, and embroidered into the cloth by the most skillful workmen procurable. Across the front of this gown were patterns of lotos leaves, dragons, and

## HER MAJESTY'S JEWELS

phœnixes. I do not know the number of pearls in this gown, nor the number of the pieces of jade, but this gown was almost as heavily patterned as that previously mentioned.

Next in order come the mandarin beads. Only three people in the Celestial Kingdom were allowed to use real pearls for mandarin beads, all others, depending upon their rank, using silver, amber, sandalwood or coral beads, in the inverse order of rank. My father, Lord Yu Keng, was an official of the first rank, and was allowed to use mandarin beads made of coral. Officials of the second rank used sandalwood, of the third amber, and so on. But Her Majesty's mandarin beads were the most perfect in existence, being perfectly matched, the whole strung on silver wire, and hanging almost to her waist. These, too, were of about the size of canary eggs. The other two permitted to use real pearls as mandarin beads were the Emperor and his consort.

Her Majesty's headdress was quite a complicated affair, and difficult to understand without illustration. It was topped by a phoenix some six or eight inches in height, made almost entirely of pearls, even to the tail feathers of the bird, the phoenix being the sign of the Empress, as the dragon was the sign of the Emperor. Around the edge of the headdress were seven

pendants of pearls, also strung on silver wire, very flexible, while in addition to those which were fastened to the headdress permanently, there were several pendant-clusters, fastened to a common center, something like a rosette, which could be fastened on as desired. As I recall it, Her Majesty wore ten of these with her pearl gowns. When one considers that her shoes contained pearls, and that there were pendants of pearls all around the lower hem of these two gowns, set so closely together that they seemed one piece of pearl fringe, one understands her fondness for pearls, and realizes that she carried some considerable weight of precious stones.

She also had pearl earrings, of the drop-pearl shape, only slightly smaller than the drop-pearl which she wore on her gown below the right shoulder, and perfectly matched.

Her Majesty's pearl rings were peculiar, from the Western viewpoint, since they were not of gold inset with pearls, but entirely of pearls, strung on circlets of silver, and she wore seven of them on each finger. Her fingernail protectors, long and curved, resembling the false spurs of gamecocks, were deeply incrustated with pearls. In addition to pearls in her various articles of dress, she had all sorts of strange ornaments of pearls. There was a pearl dragon, a pearl phoenix,

## HER MAJESTY'S JEWELS

pearl peonies, geraniums—and a pearl tiger! This last was one of the most wonderful things I have ever seen—I have often wondered what became of it.

A few words more, before I leave the matter of Her Majesty's pearls. As the pearls came in, once a year from all the provinces, they were carefully weighed and counted, each one separately, and examined expertly as to the texture of the skin, only those with perfect skin being considered proper for Her Majesty. I often assisted in the weighing and counting. In her treasure house, the walls were fitted out like cupboards, consisting of an endless number of small compartments, each compartment, in effect, a bank; each compartment being set aside for certain sizes and weights of pearls. In China, the value of pearls, everything else being equal, was in accordance with weight. When the pearls came in they were at once weighed and carefully counted. They were poured out of the containers in which they had arrived, onto "beds" of yellow satin, upon which they would not roll. Then, after the individuals had been weighed, and each pearl of a certain weight put with others of the same weight, they were counted. A eunuch did this usually, though because I was intensely interested I sometimes helped. The counting was done with a silver ladle about the size of the average chopstick, and



the pearls were tallied off in piles five at a time with the ladle or stick.

When all had been counted, the pearls of a certain size were placed in a bag of yellow satin, on which was inscribed the number of pearls, the weight per pearl, and whence they had come. All were unpierced upon arrival, as piercing indicated that pearls had been worn, and not even the most radical official would have dared send in pierced pearls. Whenever Her Majesty wished to use pearls of any size for some reason, they were taken from the proper bag, counted out, the number taken deducted from the total indicated on the yellow satin "bank-book," and the remainder carefully checked to see that the tally was correct. If it wasn't . . . Well, it usually was, as no one desired to be decapitated for losing pearls!

The yellow satin bags were placed inside little glass boxes, which reposed on little stands of blackwood, which in turn were encased in blackwood, the whole thrust into one of the cupboards, or "safety deposit boxes." When one sought pearls of a certain size, one had but to draw out the proper drawer, lift the lid from the blackwood box, see the yellow satin bag through the lid of the glass container, and read the "bank-book."

This mode of account-keeping was used with all



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Her Majesty's valuables. And bear in mind that I am referring in this article only to her precious stones—her coin was handled in much the same way, and the amount of it was far beyond my knowledge, so far as to be almost fabulous.

Now, her jade.

Jade, as dress ornamentation, was worn only in summer, while pearls might be worn both summer and winter. How difficult it is to describe Her Majesty's jade! There was no other jade like it. For example, there was one piece I remember most distinctly, which was in the shape of a cucumber, about the size of a "gherkin." As I recall there was but one piece in this shape, and it was without a flaw. Flawed jade was no part of Her Majesty's collection, as it was not considered good enough. This cucumber piece was gorgeous, flawless, and so clear one could see right through it. I have no idea of its value.

Her jade earrings were of various shapes and sizes, and her fancy ran to lotos leaves, natural size, and to leaves of various other kinds all flawless, all priceless, each piece the only one of its kind.

There is no way of knowing how long it took how many men to find the jade which went into the patterns of Her Majesty's fancy. Most of it came from Yunnan, where the best jade is found.

There was another piece which I am sure was without duplicate anywhere. It was about fifteen inches in height, and had been carved into the popular conception of the Goddess of Mercy! This was Her Majesty's prize piece for several reasons: she liked to think of herself as Goddess of Mercy, for one thing, and, for another thing, the face of the jade "goddess" was white! A white jade face, and it had been found that way, and was not combined by any Chinese artistry. The mixture of green jade and white was natural! The "White Jade Buddha" is justly famous as a huge piece of white jade, but it was, and is, not nearly so good as the Goddess of Mercy mentioned here.

Her Majesty wore three sets of jade bracelets—when jade was proper to wear—and the first pair, flawless of course, were absolutely smooth throughout, unbelievably beautiful, almost priceless. These she slipped over her hands last so that, when worn, they were against her wrists. Above this pair was a pair carved in the shape of dragons swallowing themselves, the tails vanishing into the mouths. Above these in turn was a pair of very fine jade, uncarved, and perhaps a quarter the size of the other two, thin and frail as luscious grass. I might interpolate here that Her Majesty was not especially fond of these pieces, and

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once offered, because I admired them, to give them to me. I told her that they looked beautiful when she wore them, but that they would not do for me, because my wrists were so small, as were my hands, and that I might lose them! You can well imagine that I have many times since been sorry that I did not accept the priceless gift.

Her Majesty's chopsticks were also of jade, tipped with gold at the ends with which she ate, and capped with gold at the opposite ends. In summer Her Majesty ate food, if it were not greasy (like lotos seeds, fresh walnuts, candied fruits that were perfectly dry, etc.), from jade plates, the plates being carved in the shape of lotos leaves, peach leaves, and various other kinds of leaves. Greasy things were served in silver or gold dishes.

She had another, shall I say ornament? which was a curious mixture of jade and pearls. It was a gorgeous butterfly with jade wings and a body of pearls. She had other butterfly patterns, too, of various combinations of jade—always the wings—and gold set with pearls.

You've heard of the famous "Blue Diamond Crown"? No one knows what ever became of it. It was given Her Majesty by Li Hung Chang, when Li Hung Chang was viceroy of Tientsin, China. The

blue diamond which gave the crown its name was in itself said to be worth approximately one million *taels*, or about \$620,000 at present rates of exchange. The whole crown—the blue diamond was only one of the stones!—well, I dare not even hazard a guess as to its value. Especially do I not wish to think of this crown, for it too might have been mine! I saw it many times in the treasure house—where it was shoved here and there as though it had been rubbish, merely because its motif was of diamonds and Her Majesty would not wear diamonds, because she believed them of no more value than glass! She would have given me the crown had I so much as admired it aloud in her presence! It would have been worth considerable money today, though if I did possess it, I am afraid I should never be able to part with it. I wonder where it is!

This article, of course, will give but a meager idea of Her Majesty's wealth in jewels, for I have named only the most striking pieces. Her treasure house was a vast place, and each of its four walls was a huge cupboard, each cupboard containing a multiplicity of little drawers, each drawer containing an empire's ransom in precious stones!

Many stories have been told of the fate of these things which belonged to Her Majesty, but what ac-

## HER MAJESTY'S JEWELS

tually happened to them will perhaps never be known for a certainty. I have a few pieces myself, but none of the things I have mentioned, save for some seed pearls on gowns given me by Her Majesty, when I was her First Lady-in-Waiting.

Of course there were many semi-precious stones, aquamarines and tourmalines, but to these Her Majesty scarcely ever accorded a second glance.

Memory goes back as I write, to that treasure house of Her Majesty, and to the eunuchs who handled her wealth. It always seemed to me, when I went at Her Majesty's bidding to fetch certain stones for her, that the hands of the eunuchs were dirty, and that when they delved into her things they committed the rank-est sort of sacrilege. So much wealth was on every hand—in the treasure house—that those who handled it grew to regard it with fine contempt.

I have been amused at claims I have heard, of certain persons or organizations, claiming to possess jewelry which belonged to Her Majesty, and having "certificates" to prove their contentions. I have gone, incognito of course, since I feel that people who would buy these things of a dead woman whom I loved deserve to be cheated, to examine some of these collections, and the "certificates" of authenticity. The pieces, well, I have recognized none of them, and I



saw her best pieces almost daily for more than two years. Those things *may* have belonged to Her Majesty, since during her lifetime everything in China was said to belong to Her Majesty! But my humble belief is that the claims are as false as the certificates. Concerning the latter I have not the slightest doubt. "Certificates" are readily purchasable in many places in China, especially in Peking!

Many of these things are supposed to have been among the loot taken by foreigners during the Boxer Uprising of 1900, when the foreigners invaded the Forbidden City after Her Majesty's flight to Shi An to begin her two years of exile. Another fallacy. The larger things were tucked behind a false wall in the treasure house, a false wall made of old bricks to lend the idea of extreme age, and I doubt not that soldiers of many nationalities passed these walls, totally unsuspecting that within hands' reach was wealth enough to make the passers-by, and their children's children, independent for generations.

That they did pass I am certain, for when Her Majesty returned and tore down the walls, nothing was missing from its place, as she herself told me! Only the obvious things left behind, for which Her Majesty cared little anyway, were carried away. The small things, such as some of the ornaments of jade and



## HER MAJESTY'S JEWELS

pearl I have mentioned, she merely bundled together tightly, and dropped down a well in the Forbidden City, where they were found intact upon her return.

Her Majesty was very shrewd. Had I been half so shrewd I should have been immensely wealthy today, merely through possession of things Her Majesty did not want!

THE END







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